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Alexandre Dumas

CELEBRATED CRIMES

VOLUME VII

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J.WAGREZ

LA MARQUISE DE BRINVILLIERS

The Marquise de Brinvilliers poisoning her father, M. de Dreux d'Aubray.

12946

Alexandre Dumas

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CELEBRATED CRIMES

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AFTER

ORIGINAL DRAWINGS BY DE LOS RIOS, PRODHOMME WAGREZ, ETC.

VOLUME VII

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1895

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Entered at Stationers' Hall, 1895.

H. S. NICHOLS, PRINTER, 3 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W

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La Marquise de Brinvilliers.

CELEBRATED CRIMES.

LA MARQUISE DE BRINVILLIERS.

1676.

On a certain beautiful evening in the autumn of the year 1665, a considerable crowd was collected upon that part of the Pont Neuf, which leads down into Rue Dauphine. The object which formed its centre, and upon which its attention was fixed, was a tightly closed carriage, which a police officer was doing his utmost to force open, while two of the four sergeants who were with him held the horses, and the other two the coachman, who had turned a deaf ear to the summons to halt, and had made no other reply to it than to whip his horses into a gallop. The struggle had been in progress some time when one of the doors was thrown suddenly and violently open, and a young officer, in the uniform of a captain of cavalry, leaped out upon the pavement, closing the door behind him at the same instant, but not so quickly that those who were nearest had not time to see a woman sitting back in the corner, wrapped in a cloak, and closely veiled, who seemed from the great pains she took to conceal her features to be deeply interested in remaining unknown.

"Monsieur," said the young man, addressing the officer in a haughty and imperious tone, "I presume that

your business is with me alone, unless you have blundered, and I beg you to inform me by what authority you stopped the carriage in which I was riding; now that I am no longer inside, I demand that you instruct your men to let the coachman drive on."

"In the first place," rejoined the officer, quite unconcerned by this assumption of lordliness, and signing to the sergeants not to relax their hold upon horses or driver, "be kind enough to answer my questions."

"I am listening," said the young man, evidently making a great effort to retain his self-possession.

"Are you the Chevalier Gaudin de Sainte-Croix?"

"I am."

"Captain in the Tracy regiment?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Then I arrest you in the king's name."

"By what authority?"

"By the authority of this *lettre de cachet.*"

The chevalier ran his eye rapidly over the paper which was handed him, and as he recognized the signature of the minister of police at the first glance, he seemed thenceforth to think only of the woman who was still in the carriage, and recurred to the first demand he had made.

"Very good, Monsieur," he said; "but this *lettre de cachet* contains no name but mine, and I tell you again it gives you no right to expose my companion to the gaze of the multitude as you have done. I beg you, therefore, to order your sergeants to allow the carriage to go its way, and then you can take me where you choose; I am ready to follow you."

This request apparently seemed reasonable to the officer, for he made a sign to his people to release the driver and horses; whereupon the latter, as if they had

simply been awaiting permission to be gone, plunged into the crowd, which drew aside for them, and bore the woman for whose safety the prisoner seemed so concerned rapidly away.

Sainte-Croix kept his word, and made no resistance; he followed his guide through the crowd whose attention was once more concentrated upon him. At the corner of the Quai d'Horloge a sergeant called a hired cab which was standing just out of sight, and the prisoner entered it with the same haughty and contemptuous expression which his features had retained throughout the scene we have described. The official took his seat beside him, two of the sergeants got up behind, and the others, probably in obedience to orders from their superior, walked away after giving the driver the direction: "To the Bastille!"

We crave the reader's patience for a moment while we make him somewhat better acquainted with that one of the characters of our narrative to whom he has been first introduced.

Chevalier Gaudin de Sainte-Croix, whose birth was shrouded in uncertainty, was said by some to be the natural son of a great nobleman, while others would have it that he was born of humble parents, but could not endure the thought of his obscure birth, and so preferred the gilded dishonor of illegitimacy, and to pass for what he was not. The only point as to which there was any certainty was that he was born at Montauban; at the time of which we are writing he was a captain in the Tracy regiment.

Sainte-Croix, in 1665, was some twenty-eight to thirty years of age; he was a handsome young man with a good-humored, intellectual face, a jovial boon companion, and a gallant soldier; it was his constant pleasure

to give pleasure to others, and he was as ready to give his time to any charitable or religious object, as to take part in a drunken orgie; he was very susceptible to the tender passion, and went mad with jealousy, at a moment's warning, even of a mere courtesan, if she had made a favorable impression upon him. He was as extravagant as any prince and yet his extravagance was unsupported by any known source of income. Lastly, he was extremely sensitive to fancied slights, as are all those who are living above their proper level, and are forever discerning a purpose to insult them in the slightest allusion to their origin.

Now let us see what combination of circumstances had brought him to the point at which we take him up.

In 1660, or about that time, Sainte-Croix, while with the army became acquainted with the Marquis de Brinvilliers, commanding the Normandy regiment. As they were of almost the same age, were embarked on the same career, and were alike in many of their good and bad qualities, the simple acquaintance soon ripened into sincere friendship; so that, when he returned from the field, the Marquis de Brinvilliers presented Sainte-Croix to his wife, and took him into his house.

This intimacy soon led to the ordinary result. Madame la Marquise de Brinvilliers was then about twenty-eight: in 1651, nine years before, she had married the Marquis de Brinvilliers, who possessed an income of thirty thousand livres; she brought him as her marriage portion two hundred thousand livres, exclusive of what she hoped some day to inherit. Her name was Marie Magdelaine; she had two brothers and a sister, and her father, M. de Dreux d'Aubray, was civil lieutenant at the Châtelet.

At twenty-eight years of age, the Marquise de

Brinvilliers' beauty was in its prime: she was small of stature, but her figure was perfect; her face was well-filled out, and her profile exceedingly delicate and graceful in outline; her features, which owed their perfect regularity in great measure to the fact that they were never stirred by any emotion, seemed like the features of a statue, endowed by some magic power with fleeting life, and one might well have mistaken for the serenity of a spotless soul, the cold and heartless impassibility, which was in reality but a mask to hide her remorse.

Sainte-Croix and the marchioness fell in love with each other at first sight, and soon became lover and mistress. So far as the marquis was concerned, whether he was a believer in the approved conjugal philosophy, without which no one was in fashion at that period, or whether his time was so occupied with his own pleasures, that he had no leisure to take note of what was going on almost under his eyes, certain it is that no feeling of jealousy led him to throw any obstacles in the way of this intimacy. He kept on in the course of mad extravagance which had already made serious inroads upon his fortune, and his affairs soon became so involved that his wife, who had ceased to love him, and desired even more liberty than she then enjoyed for the gratification of her new and fervent passion, asked and obtained a separation. Thereupon she left her husband's house, and throwing restraint to the winds, appeared everywhere publicly with Sainte-Croix.

This connection, which found abundant justification in the example set by the greatest nobles, made no impression whatsoever upon the Marquis de Brinvilliers, who continued to ruin himself with a smiling face, and did not trouble himself about his wife's actions. But it was far different with M. de Dreux d'Aubray, who

retained the moral scruples characteristic of the brethren of the long robe. He was scandalized by the disreputable behavior of his daughter, and fearing lest it might react upon him, and make a smirch upon his reputation, he obtained a *lettre de cachet*, which authorized the arrest of Sainte-Croix wherever the bearer of it might fall in with him. We have seen how it was served upon him when he was actually in the carriage of the marchioness, whom our readers have doubtless recognized ere this behind the veil of the woman who concealed herself with so much pains.

The little we have said as to Sainte-Croix's temperament is sufficient to show what a struggle he must have had with himself to keep from losing his head when he was arrested in the middle of the street. Although he did not utter a single word during the whole ride, it was easy to see that a terrible storm was brewing in his mind and would not be long in bursting. However, he maintained the same impassive demeanor he had hitherto exhibited, not only when he saw the frowning doors open and close behind him, which, like the gates of hell, had so often and often charged those whom they swallowed up to leave hope at the threshold. But in replying to the formal questions put to him by the governor, his voice never faltered, nor did his hand tremble when he signed the register. Immediately thereafter, a turnkey, taking his orders from the governor, requested the prisoner to follow him, and after turning a corner or two in the cold, damp corridors, to which a ray of light sometimes found its way but a breath of fresh air never, he opened the door of a cell; Sainte-Croix had barely crossed the threshold when he heard the door close again behind him.

At the groaning of the key in the lock, Sainte-Croix

turned his head: the gaoler had left him with no light save that of the moon, which shone in between the bars of a window eight or ten feet from the floor, and fell upon a wretched cot-bed, intensifying the darkness in the other portions of the cell. The prisoner stood still for a moment and listened: when the steps died away in the distance, and he felt sure that he was alone, having reached that stage of impotent wrath at which the heart must find a vent or burst, he threw himself upon the bed with a roar more befitting a wild beast than a human being, cursing the men who had snatched him away from his happy life to cast him into a dungeon, cursing God who allowed them to do it, and summoning to his aid any power whatsoever which would bring him vengeance and freedom.

On the instant, as if his words had summoned him from the depths of the earth, a thin man with pallid cheeks, long-haired, and clad in a black doublet came slowly into the circle of bluish light which shone through the window, and drew near the foot of the bed upon which Sainte-Croix was lying. It was a time when men still believed in the mysteries of incantation and magic, and this apparition followed so closely upon his words that the prisoner did not for a moment doubt that the enemy of mankind, who is forever prowling around in search of new victims, had heard him and come to the sound of his voice. He rose to a sitting posture and mechanically put out his hand toward the place where he had left his sword: courageous as he was, at every step that the mysterious, ghostly figure took toward him he felt his hair stand on end, and the cold sweat roll down over his cheeks. At last the phantom stopped, and it and the prisoner remained for a brief space gazing fixedly at each other without speaking: at last the

mysterious being broke the silence: "Young man," he said in sepulchral tones, "you appealed to hell for a means of wreaking vengeance upon them who have proscribed you, and of entering the lists against God who has abandoned you; such a means I possess, and I have come to offer it to you. Have you the courage to accept it?"

"First of all," said Sainte-Croix, "tell me, in God's name, who you are."

"What need have you of knowing who I am," retorted the unknown, "when I come the moment you call me, and bring you what you seek?"

"That makes no difference," said Sainte-Croix, still under the impression that he was conversing with a supernatural being; "when one makes such a bargain, it is a good thing to know whom one is bargaining with."

"Very well! if you insist upon knowing," said the stranger, "I am the Italian, Exili."

Sainte-Croix shuddered anew, for these words transformed an infernal vision into a fearful reality. The name which the stranger uttered was one of ghastly celebrity not only throughout France, but throughout Italy as well. Hunted out of Rome under suspicion of numerous poisonings, which could not, however, be proved, Exili came to Paris, where he soon engaged the attention of the authorities as had been the case in his native land; but it was found as impossible to convict this disciple of Reni and La Trophana at Paris as at Rome. Nevertheless, although there was no absolute proof against him, there was sufficient moral certainty of his guilt to lead the authorities to order his arrest without compunction. A *lettre de cachet* was issued against him, and he was taken to the Bastille. He had been there some six months when Sainte-Croix's arrest

took place. As the prison was somewhat crowded at that time, the governor ordered his latest guest to be put into the cell with the earlier arrival, little thinking that he was coupling together two incarnate demons.

The reader will now understand what took place. Sainte-Croix entered the cell, and was left there without a light, so that he could not see that there was another occupant; he gave full vent to his anger, and his bitter imprecations revealed to Exili his deadly hatred for the authors of his arrest. The wily Italian at once seized the opportunity to gain a powerful and devoted disciple, who, when he was restored to liberty, would cause the prison doors to open for him, or would at least avenge him if he were destined to pass his life in confinement.

Sainte-Croix's repugnance for his room-mate soon vanished, and the skilful teacher found in him an apt pupil. The young man, whose character was such an extraordinary compound of good and evil, of strength and weakness, of virtues and vices, had reached the critical period of his life, where the one or the other must needs triumph. If, in his then frame of mind, he had fallen in with an angel the angel might have led him to seek God; but he fell in with a demon, who bore him off bodily to the arms of Satan.

Exili was no common poisoner; he was a great artist in poisons, as the Medicis and Borgias were before him. In his hands murder became a fine art, and he had reduced it to fixed and positive rules; he had reached the point where he was no longer influenced by material interest, but by an irresistible craving to experiment. God reserved for the divine power alone the function of creating, and left destruction for human hands to do: the result being that man thinks he can reach God's level by indiscriminate destruction. Such was the belief of Exili,

the stern-pale alchemist, who, leaving to others the search for the secret of life, had discovered the secret of death.

Sainte-Croix hesitated for some time, but yielded at last to his companion's raillery, who charged the French with being altogether too loyal even in their methods of committing crime, and pointed out to him how they were almost always involved in their own vengeance, and fell with their victim, whereas they might, if they chose, live after him, and heap insults upon his memory. He contrasted with that noisy process, which often subjects the murderer to a more painful death than he inflicts, the craft of the Florentine, with his smiling features, and his pitiless poison. He repeated the names of all the powders and liquids, some of which do their work so slowly that the victim dies only after a long and painful sickness, while others are so violent and so swift in their action that they kill like the lightning-stroke, without giving a miserable wretch time to cry out.

Sainte-Croix gradually became deeply interested in this terrible game which puts every man's life at the mercy of a single man. He began by assisting Exili in his experiments, and was soon enough of an adept to experiment on his own account, so that, when he left the Bastille after about a year's imprisonment, the pupil was almost the peer of the master.

Sainte-Croix returned to the world, whence he had been momentarily banished, strong in the possession of a deadly secret which would enable him to repay tenfold all the evil the world had inflicted on him. Exili was released shortly after, nobody knows by what influence, and at once sought out Sainte-Croix, who hired a room for him in the name of his intendant Martin de Breuille; it was in the *cul de sac* des Marchands de Chevaux, Place Maubert, and belonged to one Madame Brunet.

It is not known whether the Marquise de Brinvilliers found an opportunity to visit Sainte-Croix while he was at the Bastille, but there is no doubt that, immediately upon his release, the lovers resumed their former relations, more in love with each other than ever. They had learned by experience what they had to fear, and so they resolved to make the earliest possible use of the knowledge Sainte-Croix had acquired. M. d'Aubray was selected by his own daughter as their first victim; in this way she would get rid of a stern censor, who threw obstacles in the way of her enjoyment, and at the same stroke replenish by what she might inherit from him, the fortune which her husband had almost entirely squandered.

When such a blow is to be struck, there must be no chance of failure, so the marchioness concluded to make her first trial of Sainte-Croix's poisons upon some other than her father. One day, when her *femme de chambre*, one Françoise Roussel, came to her room just as she finished her breakfast, she gave her a slice of ham and some preserved currants. The girl unsuspectingly ate what her mistress gave her; but she began to feel ill almost immediately, and "had a terrible pain at her stomach, and a feeling as if her heart were being pricked with needles." She did not die, however, and the marchioness saw that the poison needed to be made stronger; so she returned it to Sainte-Croix who brought her another within a few days.

The time had come to make use of it. M. d'Aubray was contemplating a brief visit to his country estate, Offemont, to rest from his official labors, and Madame la Marquise de Brinvilliers offered to accompany him. M. d'Aubray believed that her connection with Sainte-Croix was entirely broken off, and accepted her offer joyfully. Offemont was admirably situated for the perpetration

of such a crime. It was in the midst of the forest of Aigne, three or four leagues from Compiègne, and the poison was reasonably sure to have done its work sufficiently before any help could be summoned, to render such help futile.

M. d'Aubray went to Offemont with his daughter and a single servant. The marchioness had never exhibited such extreme amiability and tender consideration for her father as she lavished upon him during this journey; and he, after the manner of Christ, who had a father's heart, although he had no children, loved her better in her repentance than if she had never sinned.

The extraordinary impassibility of feature of which we have spoken stood the marchioness in good stead at this time. She was constantly with her father, sleeping in an adjoining room, taking her meals with him, overwhelming him with attentions and caresses, and refusing to allow any one but herself to wait upon him; so that, even while her infamous projects were taking shape in her brain, she was obliged to maintain upon her face a frank and smiling expression in which the most suspicious eye could read nothing but filial affection and veneration. Such an expression did her face wear on a certain evening when she passed him a cup of poisoned soup. M. d'Aubray took it from her hands; she saw him put it to his lips, and her eyes followed the motions of his throat in swallowing it, but not an indication of the anxiety which must have weighed upon her heart appeared upon her features. When M. d'Aubray had drank it all, and she had received the cup from him upon a plate, without a tremor, she withdrew to her room, waiting and listening.

The effects of the concoction were not long delayed; the marchioness heard her father utter a succession of

sharp exclamations of pain, and then begin to groan heavily. Finally, when the agony became unendurable, he called aloud for his daughter, and she came running in.

Her face now expressed the deepest concern, and her father was obliged to reassure her as to his condition; he believed himself that it was nothing more than a passing indisposition, and was unwilling to disturb a doctor on account of it. Eventually, however, he was attacked with so violent a fit of vomiting, followed soon after by excruciating pains in the stomach that he yielded to his daughter's entreaties, and told her to send for a doctor if she chose.

He arrived about eight o'clock in the morning, but long before that time everything upon which to form an accurate diagnosis had disappeared; the doctor saw in what M. d'Aubray told him nothing more than the characteristic symptoms of indigestion, prescribed accordingly, and returned to Compiègne.

The marchioness did not leave the sick man during the day, and at night she had her own bed placed in his room, and announced her purpose of watching with him, so that she could note every step of the malady, and follow with her eyes the struggle between life and death which was going on in her father's breast.

The doctor came again in the morning. M. d'Aubray's condition had grown worse; the vomiting had ceased, but the pains in his stomach were more acute, and there was a strange burning feeling in his bowels. He prescribed a course of treatment which necessitated the patient's return to Paris, but he was so weak that he hesitated to attempt to go beyond Compiègne. The marchioness, however, insisted so upon the necessity of procuring better and more skilful treatment than he could hope to find elsewhere than in the capital, that M.

d'Aubray finally decided to return to his house there. He made the journey reclining in his carriage, with his head resting on his daughter's shoulder; not for one second between Offemont and Paris did her demeanor change; not one sign did she give of the thoughts which were really passing through her mind. Everything had fallen out according to her wishes; the scene of the tragedy was changed, and the doctor who attended the sick man in the early stages would not see him in his death agony; there would be no one who would be able to ascertain the cause of his illness by having studied it from beginning to end; the thread of investigation was broken in twain, and the two parts were so far apart that there was no possibility of their ever being united.

Notwithstanding all that skill and careful nursing could do, M. d'Aubray's condition continued to grow worse; the marchioness, faithful to her self-imposed task, did not leave him for a second; at last, after four days of most intense suffering, he expired in his daughter's arms, calling down the blessing of heaven upon the hand which had slain him.

The grief of the marchioness was so noisy, and her sobs so deep, that her brothers seemed cold as ice beside her. As no one suspected that a crime had been committed, there was no autopsy, and the tomb closed upon M. d'Aubray's remains without the slightest suspicion falling upon her.

However, she had accomplished only the half of her purpose; she had, to be sure, secured greater freedom to gratify her passions, but her father's death was not so advantageous to her pecuniarily as she had hoped; the greater part of his property passed with his office to her elder brother, and to her second brother, who was a counsellor of the Parliament of Paris, so that the financial

position of Madame de Brinvilliers was changed but little for the better.

Sainte-Croix meanwhile was leading a life of idleness and pleasure; although every one knew that he had no means of his own, he kept an intendant named Martin, and three servants, Georges, Lapierre, and Lachaussée; also bearers in ordinary for his nocturnal excursions, in addition to his carriages. As he was young and handsome, however, the world was not too inquisitive as to the source of his income. It was too common at that period to excite remark that fascinating young men should want for nothing, and it was said of Sainte-Croix that he had found the philosopher's stone.

In his social peregrinations he formed several particularly strong friendships with persons, some of whom were of noble birth, and some exceedingly wealthy. Among the latter was one Reich de Penautier, receiver-general of the clergy, and treasurer of the States of Languedoc. He was worth millions; one of those fortunate individuals, who succeed in everything they undertake, and seem, by the power of their wealth, to impose laws upon things which actually receive their laws from God alone.

Reich de Penautier was associated in business with one D'Alibert, his chief clerk, who died suddenly of apoplexy; his death was known to Penautier before his family learned of it, the documents which proved the partnership disappeared, no one knew whither, and D'Alibert's wife and child were ruined.

D'Alibert's brother-in-law, Sieur de la Magdelaine, conceived some vague suspicions concerning the manner of his death, and set about investigating it to satisfy himself; while his investigations were in progress he died very suddenly.

In one direction alone did fortune seem to have abandoned her favorite. Penautier was very desirous to succeed Sieur de Mennevillette, receiver of the clergy. The office was worth sixty thousand francs, and, as he knew that M. de Mennevillette proposed to withdraw in favor of his chief clerk, Messire Pierre Hannyvel, Sieur de Saint-Laurent, Penautier took all the necessary steps to purchase it to the prejudice of the latter; but as M. de Saint-Laurent was generally sustained by the clergy, he obtained the reversion of the office for nothing—a thing which had never been done before. Penautier then offered him forty thousand crowns for a half-interest in the office, but Saint-Laurent declined. Their friendly relations were not interrupted, and they continued to meet: Penautier was so generally looked upon as predestined to succeed in his undertakings, that nobody doubted that he would sooner or later obtain the post he coveted.

Those who did not believe in the mysteries of alchemy said that Sainte-Croix and Penautier were connected in a business way.

Meanwhile the period of mourning for M. d'Aubray expired, and the relations between Sainte-Croix and the marchioness were renewed as publicly and shamelessly as ever. MM. d'Aubray remonstrated with Madame de Brinvilliers on the subject through the mouth of a younger sister who was at the Carmelite convent, and the marchioness discovered that her brothers had succeeded their father as spies upon her conduct.

Thus her first crime proved to have been almost useless to her; she had attempted to rid herself of her father's fault-finding, and to inherit his fortune; the fortune, when it reached her, was so cut down by taking out the shares of her elder brothers that it hardly sufficed

to pay her debts, and now the fault-finding was renewed by her brothers, one of whom, in his capacity of civil lieutenant could tear her lover from her arms once more.

Here was a state of things which called for a decisive remedy. Lachaussée left his position with Sainte-Croix, and three months later, on the recommendation of the marchioness, entered the service of the counsellor of the parliament, who lived with his brother, the civil lieutenant.

It would have been the height of imprudence to make use at this time of a poison so swift in its action as the one administered to M. d'Aubray: two such sudden deaths in the same family might well arouse suspicion. So they began to experiment again,—not upon animals, for the anatomical differences which exist between the different orders might have led them astray—as before, they tried their hand first upon human subjects; as before, they experimented *in anima vili.*

The marchioness was known as a deeply religious woman, of charitable propensities: rarely did poverty knock at her door to be turned away empty handed. Nay, more: she sometimes offered her services to the saintly women who devoted themselves to the care of the sick, and not only visited the hospitals, but sent wine and medicines for the inmates. It caused no surprise, therefore, when she made one of her occasional visits to the Hotel-Dieu, provided with cake and preserves for the convalescent: her gifts were received, as they always were, with deep gratitude.

A month later she visited the hospital again, and inquired concerning the health of several invalids in whom she took a great interest; since her last visit each of them had had a relapse, and in each case the disease had changed its character and become much more serious.

All of them were now suffering from a deathly languor, and seemed to be wasting away slowly but surely. She questioned the doctors, but they could tell her nothing; the disease was utterly unknown to them, and defied all the resources of their skill.

A fortnight later she came again; some of the patients were dead, others were still living, but in the last stages of dissolution—mere animate skeletons, with nothing about them to indicate life, save the weak voice, impaired sight, and almost imperceptible breath.

Within two months they were all dead, and the profession were as far at sea in the autopsy, as they had been in diagnosing the disease.

These experiments were most satisfactory, and Lachaussée received orders to carry out his instructions.

One day the civil lieutenant rang his bell, and Lachaussée, who, as has been said, was in the counsellor's service, answered the call. He found him at work with his secretary, one Cousté, and he requested Lachaussée to bring him some wine and water, which he did at once.

The lieutenant put the glass to his lips, but at the first swallow, he took it hastily away again, crying:

"What have you given me, villain? I believe you want to poison me?" Then he handed the glass to his secretary:

"Smell of that, Cousté," he said, "and tell me what there is in it."

The secretary poured a few drops of the liquor into a coffee spoon, and put it to his nose and his mouth; it smelt like vitriol, and was as bitter. Meanwhile Lachaussée walked toward the secretary, and said that he knew what the matter was; that another of the counsellor's servants had been taking medicine that morning, and that, without noticing, he had probably brought the

glass his comrade used. As he spoke he took the glass from the secretary's hand, put it to his mouth, pretending to taste it himself, and said that was just what it was, for he recognized the smell; thereupon he threw the liquor into the fireplace.

As the civil lieutenant did not drink enough to cause him any trouble he soon forgot the incident, as well as the suspicion which instinctively came to his mind at first. The marchioness and Sainte-Croix saw that the scheme had failed, and they determined to resort to another means, even at the risk of involving several persons in their vengeance.

Three months passed away before what seemed to them a favorable opportunity presented itself; but at last, in the early days of April, 1670, the civil lieutenant carried off his brother with him to pass the Easter holidays at his estate of Villequoy in Beauce; Lachaussée accompanied his master, and received fresh instructions on the eve of his departure.

On the day after their arrival a pigeon pie was served for dinner: seven persons who ate of it were taken ill after dinner, while three who abstained felt no inconvenience.

They, who were particularly affected by the poisonous substance were the brothers d'Aubray, and the *chevalier du guet.* Whether because he ate more of the pie, or because the taste he had already had of the poison made him more susceptible to it, the civil lieutenant was the first to be attacked with vomiting: two hours later the counsellor exhibited the same symptoms: the *chevalier du guet* and the others had terrible pains in the stomach for some days, but their condition was not so alarmingly serious at the beginning, as was that of the two brothers.

This time again the physicians utterly failed to render

any assistance. On the twelfth of April, four days after the poisoning, the civil lieutenant and the counsellor returned to Paris so wofully changed in appearance, that any one would have said they had been through a long and painful illness. Madame de Brinvilliers was then in the country and did not return to the city while her brothers' sickness lasted.

From the very first consultation which the doctors held upon the case of the elder brother they abandoned all hope of saving him. He had all the symptoms of the same disease to which their father had fallen a victim; the doctors believed it to be some hitherto unknown, hereditary disease, and declared freely that the patient must die.

In truth, his condition did grow worse day by day; he had an unconquerable aversion for every kind of meat, and his vomiting was incessant. During his last three days of life, he complained of a feeling as if hot coals were burning in his stomach, and the internal flame which was consuming him seemed to flash out through his eyes, the only portion of his body which still remained alive. He finally died on the seventeenth of June, 1670; the poison had taken seventy-two days to do its work.

Suspicion began to take shape; a post-mortem examination of the body was made, and the report of the autopsy duly prepared.

The operation was performed in the presence of MM. Duprè and Durant, surgeons, and Gavart, apothecary, by M. Bachot, the regular physician of the brothers. They found the stomach and duodenum black and almost falling in pieces, and the liver gangrenous and parched. They felt sure that these conditions were produced by poison; but as the presence of certain humors in the blood sometimes produce the same phenomena, they did

not dare say positively that the death of the civil lieutenant was not due to natural causes, and he was buried without any farther investigation.

M. Bachot had demanded that an autopsy be held upon the elder brother, mainly in the interest of his other patient, the counsellor. He was apparently afflicted with the same disease, and the doctor hoped to find weapons with which to defend the living in the examination of the dead. The counsellor was consumed with a burning fever, and he had no respite from extreme excitement of mind, and convulsive trembling of body. There was no position which he could endure for more than a few moments; to lie in bed was perfect torture to him, and yet as soon as he left it, he begged to be put back, so that the pain might not be always the same. At last he died, after three months of agony; his stomach duodenum and liver were found in the same disorganized condition as his brother's, and furthermore his body was actually scorched on the outside: "which was," said the doctors, "an unequivocal sign of poison; although it sometimes happens, that a cacochymy produces the same results."

Lachaussée was so far from being suspected of having caused either of these deaths, that the counsellor, as a token of his gratitude for his care of him during his last illness, left him a hundred crowns in his will; on the other hand, he received a thousand francs from Sainte-Croix and the marchioness.

The passing of so many in one family caused no less speculation than sorrow. Death is not vindictive and revengeful: he is blind and deaf, that is all, and people wondered at his apparent vindictive determination to destroy everybody who bore that particular name. However, no one suspected the real culprits, and all

attempted investigations went wide of the mark. The marchioness went into mourning for her brothers, Sainte-Croix continued his reckless extravagance, and everything went on as before.

Meanwhile Sainte-Croix made the acquaintance of Sainte-Laurent, whose office Penautier had sought without success, and soon became very intimate with him. Although Penautier's father-in-law, Sieur Lesecq, died unexpectedly in the interim, leaving to him the deputy treasurership of the States of Languedoc, besides an immense fortune, he did not forbear his longing for the receivership of the clergy. At this conjuncture, chance befriended him once more; M. de Sainte-Laurent fell sick a few days after Sainte-Croix supplied him with a new servant named Georges, and his illness at once developed the same alarming symptoms which had been observed in the cases of M. d'Aubray and his sons; but in this instance its progress was much swifter, for after twenty-four hours of most excruciating pain, M. de Sainte-Laurent died.

The same day an official from the court called upon Sainte-Laurent, and, when informed of what had happened, inquired particularly as to all the details of his friend's death: after listening to a description of the symptoms, he said to the notary Sainfroy, in the hearing of the servants, that the body must be opened. An hour later Georges disappeared, without a word to anybody, and without even asking for his wages. Thereupon suspicion became more rife than ever, but it was still vague and indefinite. The autopsy developed general phenomena which were not altogether characteristic of poison; but the intestines, which had not had time to burn as in the case of the d'Aubrays, were covered with reddish spots like flea-bites.

In June, 1671, Penautier obtained the office formerly held by Sainte-Laurent.

Meanwhile his widow had conceived suspicions which were almost changed to absolute conviction by Georges' flight. An additional circumstance added strength to her belief. An abbé, who was a friend of her deceased husband and knew the circumstances of Georges' disappearance, encountered him a few days later on Rue des Maçons near the Sorbonne. They were both on the same side, and a load of hay which was passing at the time barred the way across the street. Georges raised his eyes and recognized the abbé as a friend of his late master; he crawled under the cart at the risk of being crushed beneath the wheels, and thus eluded a man, the mere sight of whom reminded him of his crime and made him fear his just punishment.

Madame de Sainte-Laurent entered a complaint against Georges, but search where they would they could not find him.

Meanwhile the report of these sudden, unexplained, mysterious deaths had spread throughout Paris, and the people began to take alarm. Sainte-Croix, always the light-hearted and entertaining gallant, encountered the reports in the salons which he frequented, and was much disturbed by them. Suspicion did not as yet rest upon him, it is true, but it was well for him to adopt precautionary measures. He determined to secure a position which would raise him above all possible suspicion. An office in the king's household was about to fall vacant; the reversion was held at a hundred thousand crowns, and Sainte-Croix, as we have said, had no visible means of support; nevertheless it was commonly reported that he proposed to purchase it.

He applied to Belleguise to negotiate a loan with

Penautier, but the receiver of the clergy made some difficulty about complying. It was a large amount of money, and he had no farther use for Sainte-Croix as he had accomplished all that he desired; so he tried to induce him to abandon his plan.

Thereupon Sainte-Croix wrote to Belleguise:

"Is it possible, my dear fellow, that I have got to lecture you again about so important a matter and one which promises so well, as the one you know of, which may make both of us comfortable for the rest of our lives? For my own part, I think that the devil has taken a hand in it, or else that you do not choose to use your common sense. Be sensible, my dear fellow, I beg you, and look at my proposition in any light you choose; go about it in the most wrong-headed way, and still you will conclude that you ought to do as I wish, on the ground that I have arranged things in the best possible way for you, as we are equally interested in bringing about this meeting. In any event, my friend, I beg you to help me; you may be assured of my everlasting gratitude, and that you will never have done anything in the world so advantageous for yourself and for me. You must know that, for I have spoken to you on the subject more openly than I would do to my own brother. If you can come this afternoon I will be at my lodgings, or at the place you know of near by, or I will expect you to-morrow morning, or I will come to you, according to your reply to this. I am yours in everything, and with all my heart."

Sainte-Croix's lodgings were on Rue des Bernardins, and the "place near by," where he was to meet Belleguise, was the room he hired of widow Brunet in the *cul-de-sac* near Place Maubert.

This room and the house of the apothecary Glazer

were where Sainte-Croix did his experimenting; it was but just retribution that the manipulation of poisons should prove fatal to those who engaged in it. The apothecary was taken sick and died; Martin, the intendant, was attacked with violent fits of vomiting, which brought him to death's door, and Sainte-Croix himself, feeling far from well, but unable to divine the cause, became so weak that he could not leave his room, and had a furnace brought thither from Glazer's laboratory, so that he might continue his experiments, ill as he was.

He was deeply interested in the search for a poison so subtle in its action that the odor of it alone would kill.

He had heard of the poisoned handkerchief with which the dauphin, Charles VII.'s elder brother, wiped his face when playing tennis, and died from the contact; and history taught him the still living traditions of Jeanne d'Albret's gloves; these secrets were lost, and Sainte-Croix hoped to find them again.

Thereupon one of those strange things came to pass which seem to be not so much due to mere accident as to direct interposition from heaven. Sainte-Croix was leaning over his crucible, watching for the moment to arrive when the deadly preparation should reach the highest degree of intensity, the glass mask, which he wore over his face as a protection against the poisonous exhalations given off by the boiling liquid, suddenly fell off, and Sainte-Croix dropped, as if struck by lightning.*

*There are two versions of the story of Sainte-Croix's death: MM. Vautier, advocate, and Garanger, procureur, authors of the statement of the case against Penautier, claim that Sainte-Croix died after an illness of five months, caused by the vapor from his poisonous concoctions; that he retained his consciousness till the last, and received religious consolation. The author of the *Mémoire du Procès extraordinaire* of Madame de Brinvilliers, on the contrary, tells the story as we have told it here; we have adopted this version as the most probable, the most generally believed, and the most popular: the most probable, because, if Sainte-Croix

As he did not come out of his laboratory at supper time, his wife knocked at the door, but received no reply; knowing that her husband was engaged in mysterious and darksome occupations she feared that something might have happened to him. She called the servants who burst open the door and found Sainte-Croix lying on the floor beside the furnace, with the shattered mask beside him.

There was no way of concealing the circumstances of his sudden and mysterious death from the public; the servants had seen the body and talked freely about it. Picard, Commissioner of Police, was summoned to put seals upon the dead man's property, and the widow could do nothing save remove the furnace and the fragments of the mask.

All Paris soon knew what had happened. Sainte-Croix had a wide acquaintance, and the news that he was about to purchase a position at court, had given his name still greater vogue. Lachaussée was among the first to learn of his master's death, and when he found that seals had been placed upon his workroom he lost no time in drawing up a protest in these words:

"Protest of Lachaussée, who says that he was seven years in the service of the deceased, and that he deposited with him for safe keeping some two years since, a hundred pistoles and a hundred silver crowns, which should be in a little bag behind the window in the cabinet, which bag also contains a memorandum that said sum belongs to him together with an assignment of three hundred livres due him from the late M. d'Aubray,

had been ill five months, he would have had time to make away with all the papers which might compromise his friends, especially if he was conscious till he died; the most generally believed because it is the version adopted by Gayot de Pitaval and Richer; and the most popular, because his death in this way was attributed to the judgment of God.

LA MARQUISE DE BRINVILLIERS

The death of the Chevalier Gaudin de Sainte-Croix.

J. WAGREZ

counsellor, the said assignment running to one Laserre, also three receipts for one hundred livres each from the master with whom he served his apprenticeship; which sums of money and documents he hereby demands."

Lachaussée was told that he would have to wait until the seals were removed, when everything belonging to him would be restored to him, if his statements were found to be true.

Lachaussée was not the only one, however, whose concern was aroused by the death of Sainte-Croix. The marchioness, who was familiar with all the secrets of the fatal cabinet, hastened to the commissioner as soon as she heard of her lover's death, and, although it was then ten o'clock at night, requested an interview with him; she was told by his chief clerk, one Pierre Frater, that his master had retired, but she insisted with the utmost earnestness that he should arouse him, claiming that there was a casket which must be returned to her unopened. Thereupon the clerk went up to Monsieur Picard's bedroom, but came down again at once, and told her that it was impossible to comply with her request at that moment as the commissioner was asleep. Madame de Brinvilliers was finally convinced that it was useless to insist, and she went away, saying that she would send a man for the casket the next morning.

A man did, in fact, appear in the morning, and offered the commissioner fifty louis from the marchioness, if he would give up the casket to her; but he replied that it was under seal, and would be opened when the seals were removed, when its contents would be faithfully restored to the marchioness if they were really hers.

This reply was like a thunderclap to the marchioness. She had no time to lose; she rushed from her town-house on Rue Neuve Saint-Paul to her country house at

Picpus, and left there by post the same evening for Liège, where she arrived two days later and took refuge in a convent.

The seals were placed upon Sainte-Croix's effects on July 31, 1672, and the process of removing them was begun on the eighth of August. Just as they were about to begin, an attorney, with full power to act for Madame de Brinvilliers, put in an appearance, and caused the following memorandum to be entered in the report:

"Alexander Delamarre, attorney for Madame de Brinvilliers, appeared and declared that, if there should be found in the casket claimed by his client, a note signed by her for the sum of thirty thousand francs, the said note was obtained from her by false pretences, and if the signature is deemed to be genuine, she proposes to make application to have it declared void."

When this formality was gone through with, they proceeded to open Sainte-Croix's cabinet or laboratory; the key was handed to Commissioner Picard by a Carmelite monk called Brother Victorin. The commissioner opened the door; the parties interested, the officers of the law and the widow went in with him, and they began by putting the loose papers by themselves, to be arranged later in their proper order. While they were engaged in this preliminary work, a little roll of paper fell to the floor, on which was written: "*My Confession.*" As none of those present had any reason to believe that there was anything wrong about Sainte-Croix, they were of opinion that the paper should not be read; they consulted the deputy procureur-general who was of the same opinion, and Sainte-Croix's confession was burned.

Having satisfied their consciences on that subject they went on to make their inventory. One of the first

things which met their eyes was the casket claimed by Madame de Brinvilliers. Her earnestness had aroused some curiosity, so that they began their investigations with it. Every one drew near to see what it contained, and the commissioner proceeded to open it. We will let the report speak for itself; in such matters there is nothing so simple and yet so convincing as the official document itself.

"In Sainte-Croix's cabinet was found a small casket about a foot square; upon opening it, a half sheet of paper first came to hand, endorsed '*My Will*,' written on one side, and containing these words:

"'I humbly beseech them into whose hands this casket may come to do me the favor to restore it with their own hands to Madame la Marquise de Brinvilliers, who lives on Rue Neuve Saint-Paul, as everything that it contains concerns her and belongs to her alone, and moreover it contains nothing of any possible use to anybody in the world, aside from her; in the event that she should die before me, I beg that it and all its contents may be burned without being opened or disturbed. In order that no one may claim ignorance of my wishes I hereby swear by the God whom I adore, and by all I hold most sacred, that I have written nothing which is not absolutely true. If perchance any one should act contrary to my wholly just and reasonable desires in this matter, I unload the burden from my conscience upon his, in this world and the other, declaring this to be my last will.

"'Done at Paris this twenty-fifth day of May, 1672, in the afternoon.

"'Signed by

'SAINTE-CROIX.'

"And beneath, these words were written:

"'There is one package addressed to M. Penautier, which must be delivered to him.'"

It is easy to understand that such a beginning served to increase the interest; a murmur of curiosity ran through the room, but silence was soon restored. The report continued thus:

"A package was found sealed with eight seals, each bearing a different impression; on the outside was written:

"'Papers to be burned in case of my death, being of no consequence to anybody. I humbly beg them into whose hands they may fall to burn the whole, unopened, as they shall answer it hereafter.'

"In this package were found two smaller packages of corrosive sublimate.

"*Item*, another package sealed with six different seals, bearing a similar endorsement, and containing half a pound of corrosive sublimate.

"*Item*, another package sealed with six different seals, bearing a similar inscription, in which were three smaller packages, one containing a half ounce of corrosive sublimate, another two ounces and a quarter of Roman vitriol, and the third a quantity of calcined vitriol.

"In the casket was also found a large square phial, containing a pint of a transparent liquid; it was submitted to Doctor Moreau, who said that he could not give any opinion about it, until it was subjected to analysis.

"*Item*, another phial, containing half a pint of a transparent liquid, with a whitish sediment at the bottom. Moreau said the same of this as of the other.

"*Item*, a small earthen vessel, containing two or three drachms of prepared opium.

"*Item*, a folded paper, containing two drachms of corrosive sublimate in the form of powder.

"Also, a small box in which was a stone of the kind known as '*infernal stones*.'

"Also a paper containing an ounce of opium.

"Also, a piece of regulus of antimony weighing three ounces.

"Also, a package of some kind of powder, on which was written: 'To stop the flow of blood in women.' Moreau said that it was the flower of quince, and dried quince blossoms.

"*Item*, a packet was found, sealed with six seals, endorsed: 'Papers to be burned in case of my death.' It contained thirty-four letters said to have been written by Madame de Brinvilliers.

"*Item*, another packet, sealed with six seals, upon which was a similar endorsement to the above, containing twenty-seven pieces of paper, on each of which was written: 'Several interesting secrets.'

"*Item*, another package, also sealed with six seals, and endorsed like the others, containing seventy-five livres, addressed to different persons."

Besides the articles mentioned above they also found in the casket two bonds, one from Madame la Marquise de Brinvilliers, for thirty thousand francs, the other from Penautier for ten thousand; the former corresponded in date with the death of M. d'Aubray the elder, and the latter with that of Monsieur de Sainte-Laurent. The difference in the amounts showed that Sainte-Croix had a schedule of rates, and that parricide came at a higher figure than simple murder.

Thus Sainte-Croix undertook to bequeath his poisons to his mistress and his friends; he had not enough crimes upon his soul, but was desirous to be an accomplice in

crimes yet to be perpetrated. The first care of the officials was to subject all these substances to chemical analysis, and experiment with them upon different animals.

The report of Guy Simon, chemist, to whom the analysis and experiments were entrusted, was as follows:

"This artificial poison eludes investigation in every shape; it is so disguised that it is unrecognizable, so subtle that it defies analysis, so imitative that it sets at naught the skill of the best physicians. Experiments with this poison are unreliable, all ordinary rules are at fault, and the commonest axioms lead to absurd results.

"The most reliable and simplest experiments with poisons are made with elementary substances and upon animals.

"In water, the weight of the ordinary poison carries it to the bottom; place it on top of the water and it is at once precipitated in obedience to the simplest law of nature.

"The test of fire is no less sure; the fire ignites and consumes whatever is harmless and pure, and leaves behind it the bitter, acrid substance which alone can resist its attack.

"The effects which poison produces upon animals are even more unmistakable; it casts its blight upon all parts of the body which it reaches, and vitiates whatever it touches; it burns with a strange, fierce fire all the internal organs.

"This poison of Sainte-Croix's has been subjected to all these tests, with the most baffling results; it swims upon the surface of the water instead of being precipitated at the bottom; it comes unscathed through fire, and the substance left behind is sweet and harmless; in animals it conceals its presence with such clever art that it cannot be detected; all the organs of the animal are sound and in healthy action. Although this artificial

poison sets the stream of death in motion, it leaves behind it every indication which ordinarily accompanies vigorous life.

"All sorts of tests were applied to it. In the first place a few drops of a fluid found in one of the phials were poured into oil of tartar, and also into sea water; in neither case was there any precipitation at the bottom of the vessels; in the second place some of the same fluid was placed in a sanded vessel, and there was no bitter substance found at the bottom, and scarcely any fixed salt; the third test was made upon a turkey, a pigeon, a dog and other animals, all of which died and were opened the next day, and no indication of the presence of poison was found except a small clot of blood in the ventricle of the heart.

"Another experiment was made with a white powder administered to a cat in a sheep's harslet; the cat vomited half an hour and was found dead the next day, but upon examination no organ was found to have been affected by the poison.

"A second experiment with the same powder was made upon a pigeon; it died in due time, and was opened, but nothing out of the ordinary was found except a little reddish water in the stomach."

These experiments while they proved that Sainte-Croix was a most expert chemist, also gave birth to the thought that he did not practice that science for nothing; people suddenly recalled to mind the various cases of sudden mysterious deaths, and the obligations of the marchioness and Penautier had very much the appearance of blood-money. As one was absent and the other too powerful and too wealthy to be arrested without convincing proof of his guilt, Lachaussée's protest was brought forward as a basis of suspicion against him.

It was said in this protest that Lachaussée had been in Sainte-Croix's service for seven years; hence it was plain that he did not look upon the time he passed with M. d'Aubray as a break in his employment by Sainte-Croix. The bag containing the thousand pistoles, and the three receipts for a hundred livres each were found in the place he described; therefore Lachaussée must be familiar with all parts of the cabinet: if he was familiar with the cabinet, he must know of the casket; if he knew of the casket he could not be innocent.

These indications were sufficient to lead Madame Mangot de Villarceaux, widow of M. d'Aubray, the civil lieutenant, to enter a complaint against him, whereupon his arrest was ordered and accomplished. When he was arrested, poison was found upon him.

The cause came on for trial at the Châtelet; Lachaussée persisted in denying his guilt, and as the judges did not consider the evidence sufficient to convict him, condemned him to undergo the *question préparatoire.** Madame Mangot de Villarceaux appealed from a judgment which would very probably save the culprit's life if he had the courage to endure the pain and make no confession; and following upon her appeal, a decree of the Tournelle dated March 4, 1673, declared "Jean Amelin, called Lachaussée, guilty of having poisoned

*There were two species of "question" or torture—the *question préparatoire*, and the *question préalable;* the former name was applied when the judges, not convinced, sought to obtain further proof from the lips of the accused himself; the latter, on the other hand, to the torture after conviction to force an avowal of the culprit's accomplices. In the first case it often happened that the accused would endure the most frightful torture in the hope of saving his life; while it seldom happened that a culprit, knowing that his doom was sealed, cared to undergo the agony of the torture in addition to the agony of death, which was bad enough in itself. As opportunity offers we shall describe the different varieties of torture which were in use.

the second civil lieutenant* and the counsellor, and that he should be punished therefor by being broke upon the wheel, having first been subjected to the ordinary and extraordinary question, in order to make him reveal his accomplices."

By the same decree the Marquise de Brinvilliers was adjudged guilty by default and condemned to be beheaded.

Lachaussée was subjected to the torture of the *brodequins* (or boots), which consisted in placing each leg between two boards, pressing them close together with an iron ring, and driving wedges in between the boards in the centre. In the "ordinary" question four wedges were used, in the "extraordinary" eight.

When the third wedge was driven in, Lachaussée said that he was ready to speak; consequently the torture was suspended, and they carried him, stretched upon a mattress, into the choir of the chapel. He asked for half an hour's time in which to collect his thoughts, as he was very weak and hardly able to make his voice heard. We quote the following extract from the report of the torture and execution:

"Half an hour after Lachaussée was released from the torture and laid upon a mattress, he sent word to the reporter who had left the room, that he desired to see him; he told him that he was guilty, that Sainte-Croix said that Madame de Brinvilliers gave him the poison to poison her brothers; that he poisoned their water and their soup; that he put a reddish liquid in the civil lieutenant's glass and a clear liquid like water in the pigeon pie at Villequoy; that Sainte-Croix promised him a hundred pistoles, and to keep him always in his service;

*It will be remembered that the office of civil lieutenant was held by M. d'Aubray, the father, and afterward by his oldest son.

that he reported to him the effect of the poisons; that Sainte-Croix gave him some of these same liquids many times. Sainte-Croix told him that Madame de Brinvilliers knew nothing of his other poisonings, but he believed that she did know all about them, because she was continually talking to him, Lachaussée, concerning poisons; that she tried to compel him to fly, and offered him two crowns to do so; that she asked him where the casket was, and what there was in it; that if Sainte-Croix had been able to introduce some one of his own choosing into the service of Madame d'Aubray, wife of the civil lieutenant, he would have had her poisoned too; that Sainte-Croix had designs upon Mademoiselle d'Aubray."

This declaration, which left no doubt as to the truth, led to the following decree, which we copy from the records of the Parliament of Paris:

"The court having considered the report of the questioning and execution on the twenty-fourth of the present month of March, 1673, containing the declarations and confession of Jean Amelin, called Lachaussée, orders that Belleguise, Martin, Poitevin, Olivier, Père Véron, and the wife of Quesdon, the hair dresser, be summoned to appear at court, to be heard and examined upon the facts set forth in said decree, before the counsellor who formulates this present decree; and orders further that the decree of arrest against Lapierre, and the summons to appear and testify issued to Penautier by the criminal lieutenant be executed. Done in parliament this twenty-seventh of March, 1673."

By virtue of this decree, Penautier, Martin and Belleguise were examined on the twenty-first, twenty-second and twenty-fourth of April.

On July twenty-sixth Penautier was discharged from

attendance ; it was ordered that further evidence should be brought forward against Belleguise, and an order issued for Martin's arrest.

Lachaussée had already been broken on the wheel in the Place de Grève on the twenty-fourth of March.

Exili, the original cause of all the evil, had disappeared as completely as Mephistopheles after the destruction of Faust, and no one ever heard of him.

Towards the close of the year Martin was released in default of proof against him.

During all this time the Marquise de Brinvilliers was still at Liège, and although she was living in a convent she did not on that account change her mode of life in any essential respect. She was soon consoled for the death of Sainte-Croix, notwithstanding that she had loved him so well that she thought of killing herself for him.* His place was filled by one Théria, concerning whom we have found it impossible to learn anything except his name, which is mentioned several times in the subsequent proceedings.

In one way or another all the accusations came back to her, and it was determined to follow her to the retreat where she believed herself to be safe from molestation.

It was a difficult mission and an extremely delicate one ; Desgrais, one of the most clever detectives in the police department volunteered to undertake it. He was a handsome man of thirty-six or eight, with nothing about him that savored of the police agent ; he wore one costume with as much ease as another, and could

* Among the thirty-four letters of hers found in the casket was one in which this passage occurs :—"I have thought best to make an end of my life ; to that end, I took this evening some of what you so kindly gave me ; it is Glazer's receipt, and you will see by that that I make a willing sacrifice of my life for you ; but I do not promise you that I will not wait for you somewhere to say adieu to you for the last time before I die."

make up perfectly for any rôle, from the peasant to the great nobleman. He was the very man for the task and his offer was accepted.

He started for Liège, with an escort of several archers, and armed with a letter from Louis XIV. to the Council of Sixty of that city, making a demand upon them for the culprit, so that she might receive the punishment meet for her crimes. Having examined the official documents, which Desgrais was careful to take along with him, the council authorized the extradition of the marchioness.

That was an important point gained, but still it was not enough. The marchioness, as we have said, had taken refuge in a convent, where Desgrais did not dare to arrest her forcibly for two reasons: in the first place because she might be warned in time, and conceal herself in one of those hiding places which are found in all such establishments, and of which the superiors alone know the secret; the second reason was, that in so religious a city as Liège, the uproar which would undoubtedly attend such an undertaking might be looked upon as a profanation, and lead to a popular tumult, under cover of which it would be an easy matter for the marchioness to make her escape.

Desgrais inspected his wardrobe, and concluded that the costume of an abbé was best adopted to avert any possible suspicion; so he presented himself at the convent in the guise of a compatriot, just from Rome, who was unwilling to pass through Liège without paying his respects to a woman so celebrated for her beauty and her misfortunes as the marchioness.

Desgrais had all the appearance of a youth of good family and was as flattering as a courtier and as bold as as a musketeer. At his first visit he made himself so

agreeable by his wit and impertinence that he obtained permission to repeat it more easily than he hoped.

He did not wait long before he availed himself of the permission, but called again the next day. Such ardor could but flatter the marchioness, and Desgrais was received even more kindly than on the preceding day.

She was a woman of rank and of intellect who had been deprived for more than a year of all intercourse with those of her own station, and Desgrais reminded her of the life she had lived in Paris. Unfortunately the charming abbé was obliged to leave Liège within a few days; he was on that account all the more zealous in his attentions, and the privilege of calling again the next day was asked and granted without demur.

Desgrais was prompt and the marchioness was impatiently awaiting him; but by a combination of circumstances which Desgrais had doubtless arranged beforehand, their amorous interview was broken in upon two or three times just at the moment when witnesses were least welcome. Desgrais complained of the constant interruption, which, aside from the annoyance, might seriously compromise both her and himself. He begged the marchioness to meet him outside the city in a part of the public drive which was so little frequented that they need not fear being recognized or followed. She resisted just long enough to give greater value to the favor which she granted, and the assignation was made for the same evening.

The evening came and found both parties awaiting its coming with impatience, but from widely different motives. The marchioness found Desgrais at the rendezvous; he offered her his arm and as she placed her hand in his, made a signal, and the archers appeared; the lover laid aside his disguise, made himself known for what

he really was, and Madame de Brinvilliers was a prisoner. Desgrais left her in the hands of his subordinates and hurried to the convent. Then for the first time he exhibited his order from the Sixty, which caused the room occupied by the marchioness to be thrown open to him. He found a casket under the bed, which he took possession of and sealed: then he rejoined his prisoner and gave orders to start.

When the marchioness first saw the casket in his hand she seemed struck dumb; but she soon recovered her self-possession and demanded a paper which she said it contained, and which she called her confession. Desgrais declined to give it to her, and as he turned away to order the driver to drive faster, she tried to strangle herself by swallowing a pin. An archer named Laviolette detected her in the act, and succeeded in taking it from her mouth; Desgrais ordered the men to redouble their watchfulness.

They stopped for supper, and one of the archers, Antoine Barbier, was present during the meal, and saw to it that no knife or fork or anything with which the marchioness could kill or wound herself was placed upon the table. As she put her glass to her mouth as if to drink, she bit a piece out of it, but the archer saw it in time, and forced her to spit it out upon her plate. Thereupon she said to him that she would ensure his fortune if he chose to help her to escape. He asked what he must do, and she proposed to him to cut Desgrais' throat; but that he refused to do, saying that he was at her service for anything else. So she asked for pen and paper, and wrote the following letter:

"My dear Théria: I am in the hands of Desgrais, who is taking me from Liège to Paris. Come with all speed and rescue me from him."

Antoine Barbier took the letter, promising to forward it to its address; but instead of that he handed it to Desgrais.

The next morning she concluded that the first letter could not have been urgent enough, and so wrote a second one, in which she said that the escort consisted of but eight men, who could very easily be overcome by four or five determined fellows, and that she relied upon him to accomplish the feat.

At last she was so disturbed at receiving no reply, and at his failure to do as she asked, that she dispatched a third missive to him. In this she conjured him by all he held dear, even if he was unable to raise a sufficient force to attack the escort, and rescue her, to shoot two of the horses attached to her carriage, and take advantage of the consequent confusion to get possession of the casket and burn it up; otherwise, she said, she was lost.

Although Théria received neither of the three letters which were handed to Desgrais by Antoine Barbier as he received them, he repaired of his own motion to Maestricht, which was on the road from Liège to Paris. He tried to bribe the archers, offering them as much as ten thousand livres; but they were incorruptible.

At Rocray the party were met by Counsellor Pallnau, who was sent by the parliament to interrogate the prisoner when she least expected it, and would have had no time to think up her answers. Desgrais informed him of all that had taken place, and especially commended to his attention the famous casket, which caused her so much anxiety. M. Pallnau opened it, and found therein, among other things, a paper endorsed "My Confession."

This confession was a remarkable instance of the necessity under which criminals labor of confiding the story of their crimes to the sympathetic heart of man,

or the pity of God. Sainte-Croix, as we have seen, had written a confession which was burned without being read, and now it was discovered that the marchioness had been equally imprudent.* Her confession contained seven articles, and began with these words:

"I confess my sins to God, and to you, my father." It was a full avowal of all the crimes she had committed.

In the first article she accused herself of the crime of incendiarism.

In the second of having lost her virginity at the age of seven.

In the third of having poisoned her father.

In the fourth of having poisoned her brothers.

*We have done all that we could do to procure a copy of this document, which was in everybody's mouth at the time, but was never printed, either in the *Gazette de France*, the *Journal du Palais*, or in Nivelle's argument, or any of the various statements issued for or against her. So we applied to our learned friends at the Bibliothèque Paulin, Paris, Pillon and Richard, who were unable to give us any information on the subject; whereupon we turned in desperation to M. Charles Nodier, the learned bibliophile, and to M. de Montmerqué, our most profound jurisconsult; they had both made the same investigations as ourselves without result. Thereupon we had, perforce, to abandon all hope of procuring the document, and we will simply quote what Madame de Sevigné says of it in her two hundred and sixty-ninth and two hundred and seventieth letters:

"Madame de Brinvilliers tells us in her confession that she was seduced when she was seven years old; that she continued to lead a fast life; that she poisoned her father, her brothers and one of her children, and that she took poison herself in order to try the effect of an antidote. Medea is nowhere in comparison. She admits that the confession is in her own hand, and that it was a great piece of folly, but she says that she was ill with fever when she wrote it, and that it is a piece of extravagant raving, which cannot be taken seriously."—(Letter 269.)

"Nothing is talked of here but the words and deeds and movements of La Brinvilliers; she wrote in her confession that she killed her father, because she feared that she might forget to accuse herself of it. The trifles which she was afraid of forgetting are admirable."—(Letter 270.)

Rusico, who published at Amsterdam, in 1772, a new edition of the *Causes Célèbres* of Gayot de Pitaval, and was able to consult the records of the Parliament of Paris, which were intact at that time, adds the following: "Madame de Sevigné omits to say that the Marquise de Brinvilliers also tried to poison her sister, but she so stated in her confession."

In the fifth of having tried to poison her sister, a nun at the Carmelite convent.

The other two articles were devoted to a catalogue of monstrous and extraordinary debauches. There was something of the Locusta and the Messalina combined in this woman; the records of antiquity afford nothing more horrible.

M. de Pallnau, fortified by his knowledge of this important document, at once began the examination. We cite it here literally, happy now as always, when we are able to substitute official documents for our own words.

"Being asked why she fled to Liège, she replied that she withdrew from France because of some difficulty with her sister-in-law.

"Being asked if she knew what papers there were in her chest, she replied that there were several papers relating to family matters, among others a general confession which she once drew up; but she said that when she wrote it she was utterly desperate; that she did not know what she was doing, and had no idea what it contained, as she was almost insane at the time, living among strangers, with no assistance from her relatives, and reduced so low that she had to borrow a crown.

"Being asked, as to the first article in her confession, what house she set fire to, she replied that she never did anything of the kind, and her mind was wandering when she said she did.

"Being asked as to the other six articles of her confession, she said that she did not know what they were, and remembered nothing whatever about them.

"Being asked if she did not poison her father and brothers, she said that she knew nothing whatever about it.

"Being asked if Lachaussée did not poison her brothers she said that she knew nothing about it.

"Being asked if she did not know that her sister was not likely to live long because she had been poisoned, she replied that she anticipated her early death because she was subject to the same sort of attacks as her brothers; that she had entirely forgotten when she wrote her confession. She confessed that she left France by the advice of her relatives.

"Being asked why her relatives gave her that advice, she said that it was on account of the death of her brothers; she admitted that she saw Sainte-Croix after his release from the Bastille.

"Being asked if Sainte-Croix did not influence her to put her father out of the way, she replied that she did not remember, nor did she remember whether Sainte-Croix ever gave her powders or other drugs, nor whether he told her that he knew a way to make her wealthy.

"Eight letters were exhibited to her, and she was asked to whom she wrote them; she replied that she did not remember.

"Being asked why she gave Sainte-Croix a note for thirty thousand livres, she replied that she had placed that sum in his hands to use as she needed it, believing him to be her friend; that she wished the transaction kept secret because of her creditors; that she had an acknowledgment from Sainte-Croix, which she lost on her journey; that her husband knew nothing of the transaction.

"Being asked whether the note was drawn before or after the death of her brothers, she replied that she did not remember, and that it had nothing to do with the question.

"Being asked if she knew a chemist named Glazer,

she replied that she had been to his place three times for treatment.

"Being asked why she wrote to Théria to carry off the casket, she replied that she did not understand.

"Being asked why she wrote to Théria that she was lost if he did not get possession of the chest and its contents, she said she did not remember.

"Being asked if she noticed the first symptoms of her father's illness during the journey to Offemont, she replied that she did not notice that her father was ill on his journey to Offemont in 1666, either going or returning.

"Being asked if she had had no transactions with Penautier, she replied that she had none except in relation to thirty thousand livres which he owed her.

"Being asked how it happened that Penautier owed her thirty thousand livres, she replied that her husband and herself loaned him that sum; that he repaid it, and since then they had had no dealings with him."

The marchioness resorted, it will be seen, to a scheme of absolute denial. When she reached Paris and was entered on the books of the Conciergerie, she adhered to the same plan. But it was not long before the terrible weight of accusation against her was reinforced by additional charges.

Sergeant Clüet deposed that he noticed that Lachaussée, whom he knew to have been in the service of Sainte-Croix, was employed by M. d'Aubray, the counsellor, and he remarked to Madame de Brinvilliers that if her brother knew that Lachaussée had been with Sainte-Croix, he would not like it; that thereupon Madame de Brinvilliers exclaimed: "*Mon Dieu!* don't tell my brothers, for they would beat him, and it is as well that

he should be earning that pittance as that another should have it." Therefore he said nothing about it to MM. d'Aubray, although he knew that Lachaussée went every day to Sainte-Croix's house and also to Madame de Brinvilliers, who was trying to wheedle Sainte-Croix into giving her his casket; and that she insisted that he should give up her note for two or three thousand pistoles, or else she would have him murdered; that she had said that she was very anxious that no one should see what there was in the casket; that it contained matters of great importance, but which concerned nobody but herself.

The witness added that after the casket was opened he told Madame de Brinvilliers that Commissioner Picard told Lachaussée that strange things had been found in it, and that she thereupon flushed and changed the subject. He asked her if she was not privy to the whole business, and she replied: "What! I?" Then she continued, as if speaking to herself: "We must send Lachaussée into Picardy." The deponent further said that she had been for a long time trying to get the casket from Sainte-Croix, and if she had succeeded she would have had him put out of the way. He further said that, when he told Briancourt that Lachaussée was taken and would doubtless make a full disclosure, Briancourt replied, speaking of Madame de Brinvilliers: "Then that woman is lost!"—that, Mademoiselle d'Aubray having said that Briancourt was a knave, he, Briancourt, retorted that she did not know how deeply she was indebted to him; that there was a plot to poison her and the civil lieutenant's wife, and that he prevented it. He further says that he has heard Briancourt say that Madame de Brinvilliers used often to talk about ways of getting rid of people when they made themselves

disagreeable, and that there was nothing easier than to shoot them with a bowl of soup.

Edme Huet, wife of Briscien, deposed that Sainte-Croix called upon Madame de Brinvilliers every day, and that she had often seen in a casket belonging to the latter two small boxes containing corrosive sublimate in a powder and in paste; that she was sure what the substance was, being a chemist's daughter. She added that the said Madame de Brinvilliers, on a certain occasion when she was dining out, and was somewhat intoxicated, showed her a little box, saying: "There is something for revenge on one's enemies; the box is not large but its full of dead men's estates." That she then put the box in the deponent's hands; but soon after she seemed to realize what she was doing, and cried out: "*Bon Dieu!* what have I said to you! don't repeat it to anybody." That Lambert, clerk of the palace, told her that he took the two little boxes to Madame de Brinvilliers from Sainte-Croix; that Lachaussée frequently went to her house; that she, the deponent, being unable to obtain ten pistoles which Madame de Brinvilliers owed her, complained to Sainte-Croix, and threatened to tell the civil lieutenant what she had seen, whereupon the ten pistoles were at once paid; that Sainte-Croix and Madame de Brinvilliers always had poison about them, to take in case they were detected.

Laurent Perrette, who lived with Glazer, the apothecary, deposed, that he had often seen a woman come to his master's establishment, escorted by Sainte-Croix; that the servant told him that the woman was the Marquise de Brinvilliers; that he would stake his head that they came there after poison; that when they came they left their carriage at Saint-Germain market.

Marie de Villeray, lady's maid to Madame de

Brinvilliers, deposed, that after the death of M. d'Aubray, the counsellor, Lachaussée came to see her mistress, and talked with her in private; that Briancourt told her that her said mistress did honest people to death; that he, Briancourt, took orvietan every day for fear of being poisoned, and doubtless owed it to that precaution that he was still alive; but that he was in constant fear of assassination because she had told him her secret with regard to poisoning people; that Mademoiselle d'Aubray must be warned that there was a plot to poison her; and that there was a similar design against the governor of M. de Brinvilliers' children. Marie de Villeray said further that two days after the counsellor's death, Lachaussée was in Madame's bedchamber when Coustê, the late civil lieutenant's secretary, was announced, and that she concealed Lachaussée between the bed and the wall. On that occasion he was the bearer of a letter from Sainte-Croix.

Francois Desgrais, police agent, deposed, that by virtue of the king's precept he arrested Madame de Brinvilliers at Liège; that he found under her bed a casket upon which he placed seals; that she asked him for a paper which was inside, which she spoke of as her confession, but he refused to give it to her; that during the journey to Paris from Liège she told him that she believed that it was Glazer who concocted poisons for Sainte-Croix, and that one day when she and Sainte-Croix had an appointment to meet at *Croix Saint Honoré*, he showed her four small bottles, and said to her: "See what Glazer sent me!" She asked him for one of them, but he replied that he would rather die than give her one. The deponent added that Antoine Barbier, one of his archers, handed him three letters which Madame de Brinvilliers wrote to Théria; that in the first she enjoined upon him

to follow after the party, and take her from the hands of the soldiers; that in the second she told him that the escort consisted of but eight men, and that five could whip them; and that in the third she urged him, if he could not rescue her from the custody of her captors, to attack the commissioner, kill the horse of his valet, and two of the four horses which drew her carriage, seize the casket and papers, and burn them all; otherwise she was lost.

Laviolette, archer, deposed, that on the evening of her arrest Madame de Brinvilliers tried to swallow a long pin, but that he prevented her, and told her that she was a miserable wretch, for he saw that all that was said of her was true and that she had poisoned her whole family; to which she made reply, that if she had done so it was entirely on account of the bad advice she had received, and, besides, people were not always in their right mind.

Antoine Barbier, archer, deposed, that Madame de Brinvilliers tried to bite a piece out of a glass from which she was drinking at dinner, and that when he interfered to prevent her, she told him that if he would help her to escape she would make his fortune; that she wrote several letters to Théria; that during the whole journey she did her utmost to swallow glass, or stones, or pins; that she proposed to him to cut Desgrais' throat, and murder his valet; that she told him that the casket must be burned, and with it all that it contained; that she wrote to Penautier from the Conciergerie, and gave him the letter, and that he pretended to deliver it.*

* This letter was in these words:

"Martin, who was to be in your neighborhood must keep in close hiding; make haste to warn him."

Penautier never received the letter, but when he heard of Madame de

Lastly, Françoise Roussel, deposed, that she was at one time in Madame de Brinvilliers' service, and that her mistress one day gave her some preserved currants to eat; that she ate some of them on the point of a knife, and was at once taken sick; that she also gave her a slice of ham which she ate, and for a long while had sharp pains in her stomach, as if needles were being stuck into her, and that she lived in that state for three years, thinking that she was poisoned.

In the face of such evidence as this it was difficult to maintain the same system of absolute denial. Nevertheless Madame de Brinvilliers still insisted that she was not guilty, and M. Nivelle, one of the leading advocates of the day consented to undertake her defence.

He dealt with all the charges one after another with remarkable skill, admitting the adulterous connection of the marchioness with Sainte-Croix, but denying her participation in the murder of either of the Messieurs d'Aubray, which he attributed entirely to Sainte-Croix's desire for vengeance upon them. As to the confession, which was the strongest, and in his view the only evidence worthy of notice, he attacked the competency of such evidence by arguments founded upon reported cases, in which the statements of accused persons against themselves were rejected in consonance with the legal maxim: *non auditur perire volens.*

He cited three such cases, and as they are not lacking in interest we copy them word for word from his argument.

First Case.

"Dominicus Soto, a very celebrated canonist and learned theologian, who was confessor of Charles V.,

Brinvilliers' arrest he warned Martin, of his own motion, in time to get him out of the way when they came to arrest him.

and was present at the early meetings of the Council of Trent under Paul III., mentions the case of a man who lost a paper on which he had written down his sins. Now it came to pass that an ecclesiastical judge found this paper, and proposed to use it as proof against the man who wrote it; but the judge was justly punished by his superior, on the ground that confession is so sacred a thing that it should be buried in everlasting silence under whatever circumstances it is made. The following judgment, reported by Roderic Acugno, a celebrated Portuguese archbishop in the *Traité des Confesseurs*, was rendered in conformity to that proposition.

"A Catalan, born in the city of Barcelona, having been condemned to death for a homicide which he had committed and confessed, refused to confess to the priest when the time for punishment arrived. He resisted all the pressure brought to bear upon him with so much violence, and yet gave no reason therefor, that every one was convinced that his conduct, which was attributed to an unhinged mind, was caused by fear of death.

"Saint Thomas de Villeneuve, Archbishop of Valentia in Spain, where the sentence was pronounced, was notified of his obstinacy. That worthy prelate was charitable enough to do his utmost to force the culprit to confess, so that his soul might not be destroyed, as well as his body. But he was thunderstruck, when in response to his request for his reasons for refusing to confess, the condemned man said that he held all confessors in utter abhorrence because he would not have been convicted except for the revelation made by his confessor of what he told him in the confessional. He said that not a soul knew anything about it, but that he admitted the crime to his confessor and told him where he buried his victim and all the details of the murder; that these

facts were revealed by him, and as he was unable to deny them he was convicted; that he had only recently learned something which he did not know when he confessed, namely that his confessor was the brother of the man he killed, and that his desire for vengeance led him to disclose the secrets of the confessional.

"Upon this declaration Saint Thomas de Villeneuve considered the transaction to be of much more importance than the prosecution, for that concerned only the life of a private individual, while in the other matter the honor of the religion was at stake, and its consequences were infinitely more far-reaching. He deemed it essential to satisfy himself as to the truth of the declaration; therefore he sent for the confessor, and having made him confess the sin of revealing the secrets of the confessional, compelled the judges who awarded the sentence to recall it, and to discharge the accused; which was done with the enthusiastic approval of the public.

"As to the confessor, he was sentenced to undergo a very severe penalty which Saint Thomas de Villeneuve relaxed somewhat in consideration of his prompt admission of his offence, and particularly because of the opportunity afforded by his action to emphasize the respect which the courts ought to have for the sanctity of confessions."

Second Case.

"In 1579, an inn-keeper of Toulouse, with his own hand and without the knowledge of any member of his household, murdered a guest of his establishment, and buried him secretly in the cellar. Stung by remorse the miserable wretch confessed the crime to his confessor, told him all the circumstances, and even pointed out the spot where the body was buried. The relatives of the

victim after searching high and low for traces of him, at last offered a large reward to anybody who should disclose what had become of him. The confessor, tempted by the bait, notified them secretly that they had but to look in the cellar of the inn, and they would find the body there. It was found in the place indicated, the inn-keeper was arrested and put to the torture, and confessed the crime. But after that he maintained that the disclosures made in the confessional were all that could have betrayed him.

"Thereupon the parliament, indignant at the means resorted to to reach the truth, pronounced him innocent, until other evidence should be produced than that of the confessor, who was sentenced to be hanged, and to have his body thrown into the fire, so thoroughly did the tribunal in its wisdom realize the importance of rendering inviolable a sacrament indispensable to the salvation of mankind."

Third Case.

"An Armenian woman had aroused an ardent passion in the heart of a young Turkish nobleman; but her virtue long withstood her lover's impatient ardor. At last his passion overran his discretion, and he threatened to kill her and her husband together if she would not yield to him. Terrified by this threat, which she was only too sure that he would put in execution, she pretended to yield, and gave him an assignation at her own house at a time when she said that her husband would be away from home. But, at a preconcerted signal, the husband appeared, and although the Turk was armed with a sabre and a pair of pistols, in the end they succeeded in making away with him, and buried him inside the house without the knowledge of anybody.

"Some days after they went to confession to a priest of their nation, to whom they disclosed the tragic story to the smallest detail. This unworthy minister of the Lord thought that, in a country governed by the laws of Mahomet, where the priestly office and the functions of the confessor are either unknown or proscribed, there would be no inquiry into the source of the information which he furnished the authorities, and that his testimony would have equal weight with that of any other accuser; consequently he determined to seize the opportunity to indulge his avarice. He went again and again to the husband and wife, borrowing a considerable sum every time, with threats to reveal their crime if they refused to accommodate him. The first three or four times the poor wretches complied with the demands of the priest; but at last the time came when they were despoiled of their whole fortune, and were obliged to refuse him the sum which he asked. The priest at once fulfilled his threat by denouncing them to the father of the deceased, hoping to obtain more money from that source. He was passionately fond of his son; he went to the vizier, and told him that he knew who his son's murderers were from the testimony of the priest to whom they had disclosed the crime in the confessional. But his denunciation had a different effect from that which he anticipated; the vizier was moved with pity for the unfortunate Armenians, and wrath for the priest who betrayed them, in equal degree. He sent the accuser into a room adjoining the divan, and summoned the Armenian bishop, to ascertain what the rite of confession was in his Church, what penalty was incurred by a priest who disclosed secrets confided to him in the confessional, and how those persons should be dealt with whose crimes were made known by that means. The bishop replied that the secret

of the confessional was inviolable, that the justice of Christendom sent to the stake every priest who violated it, and absolved those who were convicted by that means, because the revelation of the confession made by the culprit to the priest was enjoined by the Christian religion, under pain of everlasting damnation.

"The vizier, satisfied by these replies, showed the bishop into another room, and sent for the accused, to learn from them the circumstances of the affair; the poor creatures came in more dead than alive, and threw themselves at the vizier's feet. The woman spoke for both, and explained to him that the necessity of defending their honor and their lives put the weapons in their hands and directed the blows with which their enemy was slain; she added that God alone was witness of their crime, and that it would still be unknown if the law of that same God had not compelled them to confide the secret to one of his ministers to obtain absolution for it, and had not the priest's insatiable greed led him to denounce them after he had reduced them to penury.

"The vizier told them to go into a third room, and sent for the false priest, and confronted him with the bishop, whom he called upon to repeat the penalty incurred by those who should reveal the secrets of the confessional. He then applied the bishop's words to the culprit, and ordered him to be burned alive in the public square, pending his arrival in hell, where he would not fail to meet the just reward of his treachery and crime. The sentence was executed at once."

Whether it was that the judges did not admit the pertinency of these three precedents, or that they considered the other evidence sufficient without considering the confession, certain it is that they failed to produce

the effect which the advocate expected, and it was evident to everybody from the conduct of the trial, that the marchioness would be convicted. In fact, before the judgment was rendered, M. Pirot, a doctor of the Sorbonne came to her cell—it was Thursday morning, July 16, 1676—at the request of the first president of the parliament. This worthy magistrate, anticipating the almost certain result of the trial, and thinking that such a terrible sinner ought not to be obliged to wait until the last hour for such assistance as religion could afford her, had sent for that excellent priest, and although he reminded him that there were two regular chaplains at the Conciergerie, and insisted that he was too weak for such an undertaking, as he could not bear the sight of a drop of blood without being ill, the first president was nevertheless so persistent, saying again and again that he must have a man in whom he could place perfect confidence, that he finally agreed to undertake the painful service.

Indeed the first president himself declared that Madame de Brinvilliers was possessed of a strength of will which almost terrified him, accustomed as he was to criminals of every stamp. The day before he sent for M. Pirot he worked at the case from morning till night, and for thirteen hours the accused was face to face with Briancourt, one of the strongest witnesses against her. And again on the day in question she was confronted with him for five hours, and she went through both ordeals, without once failing in respect toward the judges, or relaxing her haughty, scornful demeanor toward the witness, whom she characterized as a miserable drunken wretch of a valet, whose evidence against her ought to be disregarded because he had been turned out of her house on account of his bad character and habits. Therefore the president had no hope of bending that

inflexible spirit unless it could be done by a minister of religion; and the ends of justice would be but partially fulfilled by her execution on the Place de Grève, unless her poisons died with her, for otherwise her death would afford society no relief.

Doctor Pirot introduced himself to the marchioness with a letter from her sister, who was, as we have said, a nun at the Convent of Saint-Jacques, under the name of Sister Marie, in the letter she conjured Madame de Brinvilliers in most affectionate and moving terms to confide in the good priest, and to look upon him, not only as a bearer of consolation, but as a true friend.

When M. Pirot presented himself in her cell she had just been released from the criminals' bench where she had undergone a severe examination for three hours without admitting anything, and without the slightest sign that she was at all touched by what the first president said to her, although, after he had fulfilled his duty as judge, he addressed her with words of Christian counsel, and after impressing upon her her deplorable plight, appearing for the last time before her fellow men, and soon to appear before the judgment seat of God, he spoke to her, in the attempt to move her, with such feeling and emotion, that his own voice broke, and the oldest and most hardened judges wept as they listened to him.

As soon as the marchioness saw M. Pirot, she suspected that the death sentence had been pronounced, and she hurried to meet him saying:

"You have come, Monsieur to———"

But Père Chavigny, who was with the doctor, interrupted her.

"Madame," he said, "let us begin by offering prayer."

All three knelt, and joined in an appeal to the Holy Spirit; then Madame de Brinvilliers requested the others

to offer a petition to the Virgin, and when that was done, she went up to the doctor, and began again where her sentence was broken off:

"Surely, Monsieur," she said, "you have come at the bidding of the first president to offer me the consolation of religion; I must pass what little time I have left to live with you; for a long, long while I have been impatient to see you."

"Madame," the doctor replied, "I have come to do whatever I can for your spiritual welfare, but I could have wished that it were under other circumstances than these."

"Monsieur," the marchioness rejoined with a smile, "we must be prepared for anything."

Thereupon she turned to Père Chavigny.

"My father," she continued, "I am extremely obliged to you for bringing Monsieur here, and for all the visits you have been good enough to make me hitherto. Pray to God for me, I beseech you. Henceforth I shall hardly have time to speak to anybody but Monsieur, for I have to talk with him of matters which cannot be discussed in the presence of a third person. So adieu, my father, God will reward you for the kindness and consideration you have shown me."

At these words the priest withdrew, and left the marchioness with the doctor, and the two men and one woman who formed her regular guard. It was a large room in the Montgommery Tower, and was as broad as the tower itself.

There was a curtained bed at the farther end for the prisoner, and cots for the guard. It was the same room in which the poet Théophile was said to have been imprisoned at one time, and there were some lines of his composition and written by his hand near the door.

As soon as the two men and the woman saw for what purpose the doctor had come they discreetly withdrew to the other end of the room, and left their prisoner at liberty to ask and receive such consolation as the man of God had to give. Thereupon she and the doctor sat down at opposite sides of a table. The marchioness believed that she was already condemned, and began the conversation upon that basis; but the doctor told her that no decision had yet been reached, that he did not know just when the decree would be rendered, and still less what its purport would be; but at that point the marchioness interrupted him.

"Monsieur," she said, "I am not alarmed about the future; if my fate is not sealed, it soon will be. I expect to hear of it this morning, and I anticipate nothing else than death; the only favor which I dare hope from the first president is a brief delay between the sentence and its execution; for, indeed, Monsieur, if I should be executed to-day, I should have very little time to prepare, and I really feel that I need more."

The doctor did not expect to hear her talk in that strain; and he was overjoyed to find that she entertained such sentiments. For, in addition to what he had learned from the first president, Père Chavigny told him that on the previous Sunday he had said to her that there seemed to be little probability that she could escape the death penalty, and that she must look for that result, so far as he was able to judge by what was said in the city. She seemed thunderstruck at first when he said this, and exclaimed in terror:

"Father, do you think this business will cause my death?"

But when he tried to say some words of comfort to her, she at once raised her head and shook it, and replied with a proud and disdainful air:

"No, no, my father, there is no need to talk so to me; I will take my own course when the time comes, and I shall know how to die like a brave woman."

And when the priest said to her that death was not a thing to be disposed of so cavalierly, nor so simply, but that on the contrary, one ought to be on the lookout for it, so as not to be taken by surprise, she retorted that she needed only a quarter of an hour to confess and a second to die.

It is not to be wondered at therefore that the doctor was surprised and delighted to find that her sentiments had changed so materially between the Sunday and the Thursday.

"Yes," she continued after a pause, "the more I reflect, the more I think that one day would be too short a time in which to put myself in proper condition to appear before the tribunal of God, to be judged by Him, after I have been judged by men."

"Madame," the doctor replied, "I do not know what the judgment will be in your case, nor when it will be rendered; but if it should be sentence of death, and if it should be pronounced to-day, I venture to promise you that it will not be executed before to-morrow. But although your fate is not certain, I strongly approve of your preparing for the worst that can befall."

"Oh! as for my death, there is no doubt about that," she said, "and I must not flatter myself with vain hopes. I have the whole story of my life to confide to you, my father, but before I open my heart to you thus fully, permit me to ask you what opinion you have formed of me, and what you think I ought to do in my present state."

"You anticipate my purpose," the doctor replied, "and meet me half-way in what I was seeking to find a

way to say to you. Before going into the secrets of your conscience, before entering upon the discussion of your relations with God, I shall be very glad, Madame, to lay down some rules, upon which you can build. I do not yet know that you are guilty of anything, and I hold my judgment in abeyance as to all the crimes which are laid at your door, since I can learn nothing about them except by your confession. Thus it is my duty still to doubt your guilt; but I can not claim to be ignorant of the things which are charged against you; the charges are public property and have come to my knowledge; for," the doctor continued, "you can readily imagine, Madame, that your affairs have created a deal of excitement, and there are very few people who do not know something about them."

"Yes, yes," she said, with a smile, "I know that I am much talked about, and that people make use of me to point a moral."

"Then, too," the doctor resumed, "the crime of which you are accused is poisoning, and I must say to you, that if you are guilty, as is generally believed, you can not hope to be forgiven in the sight of God, unless you disclose to your judges what poison it is that you use, what materials enter into its composition, what is its antidote, and the names of your accomplices. It is absolutely necessary, Madame, to lay hold of all the villains and not spare one, for if you shield them they will be in a position to continue to make use of your poison, and you will be guilty then of all the murders they may commit after your death because you did not deliver them up to justice while it was still time; so that one might say that you will survive your own death, for your crime will survive you. Now, you are aware, Madame, that sin which lives after the death of the sinner,

is never pardoned, and that, in order to obtain remission of your sins, if you are a criminal, you must have them die before yourself; if you do not kill them, Madame, beware, for they will kill you, body and soul."

"Yes, I agree to all that, Monsieur," said the marchioness, after a moment of silence and thought, "and without admitting as yet that I am guilty, I promise to consider your maxims with due care. Meanwhile, Monsieur, a question, and believe that I must have the true solution of it. Is there no unpardonable sin in this life? Are there no sins of such enormity that the Church dares not pardon them, and that God's mercy can not extend to them even if His justice does consider them? Do not wonder that I begin with this question, Monsieur, for it would be absurd for me to confess if I had no hope."

"I prefer to believe, Madame," the doctor replied, gazing at the marchioness with a sort of shudder, in spite of himself, "that what you put forward is intended by you simply as a theme for general discussion and has no connection with the real state of your mind," therefore I will reply to your question without applying what I say to you personally in any degree. No, Madame, there are no unpardonable sins in this life, however heinous they may be. Indeed that is an article of our faith, and you could not die a good Catholic if you doubted it. Some doctors, it is true, have sometimes maintained the opposite, but they have been condemned as heretics. Nothing but despair and impenitence at the last are unpardonable, and they are sins of death, not of life."

"Monsieur," said the prisoner, "God is so gracious to me as to convince me of the truth of what you say, I believe that He can forgive every sin; I believe that He

has often exercised that power. Now all my anxiety is caused by the fear that He will not deign to bestow His forgiveness upon such a wretched creature as myself, and one who has rendered herself so unworthy of the blessings He has heretofore bestowed upon her."

The doctor did his best to reassure her, and set himself to examining her closely, talking with her the while.*

"She was," he wrote, "a woman naturally courageous to intrepidity; she seemed to have been endowed by nature with a reasonably kind and upright disposition; she had the air of being indifferent to everything; she was very quick-witted and keen, with a very clear grasp of ideas, and the faculty of expressing them with great justness and precision in very few words; she was very clever at inventing expedients to extricate herself from a difficult position, and at making up her mind wisely in the most embarrassing dilemmas; fickle she was and chary of forming attachments; uneven in temper, impatient, and quick to take offence when one spoke to her frequently of the same thing; and it was that peculiarity," the doctor continues, "which compelled me to change the subject now and then, so as to detain her but a short time upon one subject, which I could easily bring up again, however, after a while by putting it in a different form, or approaching it from a different point of view. She spoke little, but very well, and without study or affectation; she was perfectly self-possessed, always ready, and never said anything more or less than she meant, and no one would have taken her from her

* From this time on, thanks to the manuscript narrative left by M. Pirot, and placed at our service by our learned friend, Paulin Paris, we are able to follow the Marquise de Brinvilliers, step by step, to the scaffold and the funeral pile. This narrative has never been published, and although it is mentioned by Gayot de Pitaval, and by Richer, they made no use of it.

features or her conversation, to be so wicked a person as it appeared that she was from her public confession of parricide. A most wonderful thing it is, wherein we can but marvel at the judgment of God in leaving man to his own resources, that one in whose nature there was something of true greatness, imperturbable presence of mind in the most unforeseen emergencies, firmness which nothing could move, and sufficient resolution to await death calmly and undergo it bravely, that such a one should be capable of a cowardly crime like the parricide which she confessed to her judges.

"There was nothing in her face which portended such extraordinary depravity; she had very thick chestnut hair; her profile was well filled out and regular in outline; lovely, speaking blue eyes, a wonderfully white skin, and a well-shaped nose, completed a countenance, in which there were no unpleasant features, nor, on the other hand anything to make it particularly fascinating; she had some premature wrinkles which made her look older than she really was. Something impelled me to ask her age at our first interview. 'Monsieur,' she said, 'if I live until Saint Mary Magdalen's day I shall be forty-six. I was born on that day, and I bear her name, for I was christened Marie-Magdelaine. But although that day is near at hand I shall not live to see it; it will be all over with me to-day, or to-morrow at the latest; I shall esteem it a great favor if I am allowed to live until to-morrow, and yet I am led to expect that favor on the strength of your promise.' One would have said to look at her that she was forty-eight at least. Her expression was naturally gentle and sweet, but when anything occurred to cross her, she showed it by a contortion which was terrifying at first, and from time to time I noticed convulsive movements of her features which

signified anger, contempt and disappointment. I forgot to say that she was very short and slight.

"Such is a description of her physical and mental qualities as I observed them in the few moments that I devoted to examining her with great care—my purpose being to govern my future conduct by what I discovered."

In the midst of the first rough outline of her life which she drew for her confessor, the marchioness remembered that he had not said mass, and reminded him that it was time to do so, indicating the chapel of the Conciergerie as a suitable place, and begging him to say it in her behalf, and in honor of the Virgin, so that she might obtain her intercession for her with God; she said that the Virgin had always been her patron saint, and that she had never ceased to feel the deepest adoration for her, even in the midst of her crimes and debauchery; as she could not go to the chapel with him, she promised to be with him in spirit.

It was half-past ten in the forenoon when he left her, and in the four hours that their interview lasted, he had led her, by dint of his gentle words of piety and admonition, to disclosures which the threats of the judges and the fear of torture were powerless to draw from her. He said mass with the most fervent earnestness, imploring the Lord to strengthen with His strength confessor and penitent alike.

When he returned to the office of the director after the mass was at an end, to take a glass of wine, he learned from a bookseller named Seney, who chanced to be there, that Madame de Brinvilliers' sentence had been pronounced, and that she was to have her hand cut off. This severity, which was omitted, however, in the decree as finally rendered, inspired in his heart a greater

interest than ever in his penitent, and he at once went up to her cell.

As soon as she saw the door opened, she walked towards him with a serene expression, and asked him if he had prayed earnestly for her, and upon his assurance that he had, she continued :

"My father, shall I not have the consolation of receiving the viaticum before I die?"

"Madame," the doctor replied, "if you are condemned to death, you will certainly have to die without that, and I should mislead you if I gave you any reason to hope for that privilege. We have read in history that a constable of France, the Constable de Saint-Paul, was unable to obtain it before his death, notwithstanding the persistent efforts that were made in his behalf. He was executed on the Place de Grève, in sight of the towers of Notre-Dame. He offered up a prayer, as you will have the right to do if the same fate is in store for you ; but that is all, and God, in His infinite mercy, will accept that as sufficient."

"But, my father, unless I am sadly at fault in my history, MM. de Cing-Mars and de Thou received the sacrament before they died."

"I do not think so," the doctor replied, "for it is not so stated in the *Mémoires de Montrésor*, nor in any other account of their execution."

"How about M. de Montmorency?" said she.

"How about M. de Marillac?" retorted the doctor.

Indeed, although the favor was granted to the former, it was denied M. de Marillac, and his example was the more conclusive to the marchioness, in that he was of her family, and she was very proud of the connection. She doubtless did not know that M. de Rohan received the sacrament at the mass which Perè Bourdaloue said for

the welfare of his soul, for she did not mention him, and made no other reply than a long-drawn sigh to the doctor's last suggestion.

"Furthermore," he continued, "even if you should cite some striking example, Madame, build no hopes upon it, I beg, for such instances are exceptions to the general rule. You must look for no special privileges, for in your case the ordinary course will be pursued, and you will be treated like other condemned criminals. Think what that treatment would have been, had you lived and died in the time of Charles VI.! Until his reign culprits died without an opportunity to confess, and that harsh rule was never relaxed except by special order of the king. After all, Madame, communion is not absolutely essential to salvation; and then, too, one does practically receive communion, by reading the word of God, which is the body, by clinging fast to the Church, which is the mystic substance of Christ, and by suffering for Him and with Him the last communion of the death penalty, which is your lot, Madame, and the most desirable lot to be imagined. If you abhor your crimes with all your strength, if you love God with all your heart and soul, if you have faith and charity, your death will be a martyrdom, a second baptism."

"Alas! *Mon Dieu*," the marchioness rejoined, "if what you say is true, Monsieur, and death by the hand of the executioner is necessary to save me, what would have become of me if I had died at Liège, and where should I be now? And even if I had not been captured, and had lived twenty years away from France, what a wretched death I must have died at last, since nothing less than the scaffold could sanctify it! Now, Monsieur, now I can see all my sins in their true light, and in my eyes the last is the greatest of all—I mean my effrontery

in the presence of the judges. But all is not lost yet thank God, and as I have still another examination to undergo, I propose then to lay bare my whole life from beginning to end. I beg you, Monsieur, to ask Monsieur, the first president, to forgive me; while I was on the felon's bench yesterday he said many very touching things to me, and I was deeply moved by them, but I tried not to show it, for I thought that, aside from my confession, there was not sufficient proof to convict me. It has turned out otherwise, and I fear that my bold demeanor scandalized my judges. But now I realize my error, and will do my best to repair it. Pray say also to Monsieur, the first president, that I am so far from bearing him malice for the sentence he has pronounced against me to-day, and so far from complaining of the prosecuting officer who sought to procure this result, that I thank them both very humbly, as my salvation depended upon it."

The doctor was proceeding to reply in words calculated to strengthen her spirit of humility and repentance, when her dinner was brought in, for it was half-past one. The marchioness broke off the conversation and attended to the laying of the cloth with as much zest and interest as if she were doing the honors of her own house. She seated the two men and the woman who kept watch over her, at the table, and said to the doctor:

"You don't care, Monsieur, to have us stand on ceremony with you; these good people are in the habit of taking their meals with me for company's sake, and we will do the same to-day if you have no objection. It's the last meal we shall take together," she said to them.

"Poor Madame de Rus," she continued, turning to the woman; "I have been bothering you for a long, long

while, but have patience a little longer, and you will soon be rid of me. To-morrow you can go to Dravet; you will have time enough for that, for at seven or eight o'clock you will have done with me; I shall be in the hands of Monsieur here, and you will not be allowed to come near me. When that time arrives you can take your leave at once, for I don't believe you will have the heart to see me executed."

She said all this with the utmost tranquillity, and entirely without haughtiness, and as her watchers turned aside now and then to hide their tears, she made a gesture of compassion. As the dinner was standing on the table all the while, and no one eating, she asked the doctor to take some soup, apologizing because the concierge had put cabbage in it, thereby making a vulgar dish of it, unfit to be set before him. She herself took a plate of soup and ate two eggs, explaining her failure to wait upon her guests by the fact that neither knife nor fork was allowed within reach of her hand.

During dinner she requested the doctor to allow her to drink his health; he gallantly replied by drinking hers, and she seemed much pleased by his condescension.

"To-morrow is a day of fasting," she said, putting down her glass, "and although it is like to be a very fatiguing day for me, as I shall have to undergo the question, and death too, I do not propose to violate the commandments of the Church by eating flesh."

"Madame," replied the doctor, "if you need a plate of soup to keep up your strength, you need have no scruples about taking it, for the law of the Church does not apply in cases of necessity."

"Monsieur, I will have no hesitation, if I need it, and you authorize me to take it, but I shall do very well without, I trust; if I can have a plate of soup this evening

at supper, and another one stronger than usual just before midnight, they will carry me through to-morrow with the help of two fresh eggs which I will take directly after the question."

"It is not to be denied," says the priest, in the narrative from which we borrow all these details, "that I was terrified by her amazing *sangfroid*, and that I shuddered in spite of myself to hear her calmly order the concierge to make the soup stronger than usual that evening, and to have two cups ready for her just before midnight. When the dinner was over, they gave her paper and ink which she had asked for, and she told me that she had a letter to write, before requesting me to take the pen and write at her dictation."

This letter, concerning which she said that it was a terrible load upon her mind, and that after it was written she should feel much more at ease, was to her husband. She manifested at that moment such a depth of affection for him, that the doctor, in view of what had taken place, was astonished beyond measure, and sought to put her affection to the test, by observing that it was evidently not reciprocated, for her husband had left her to her own resources throughout her trial; but she thereupon interrupted him.

"My father," said she, "we should not always judge things on the spur of the moment and by appearances. M. de Brinvilliers has always shown a deep interest in me, and has failed to do only what it was impossible for him to do. We never ceased to correspond all the time I was out of France, and you need have no doubt that he would have hurried to Paris as soon as he knew that I was in prison, did not his circumstances make it impossible for him to come without danger. But you must know that he is over head and ears in debt, and

that his creditors would have him arrested as soon as he arrived. Pray do not believe that he is indifferent to my fate."

With that she set about writing her letter, and when she had finished, she handed it to the doctor, saying:

"You are supreme over all my thoughts and feelings, Monsieur, from now until I die; read this letter, and if you find anything in it to change, tell me so."

Here is the letter as she wrote it:

"As I am on the point of surrendering my soul to God, I desired to assure you of my affection, which will be yours to my last breath. I ask you to forgive me all that I may have done contrary to what I owed you; I am about to die a shameful death which my enemies have brought upon me. I forgive them with all my heart, and I beg you to forgive them too. I hope that you will also forgive me the ignominy which may rebound upon you; but reflect that we are here on earth for a brief period only, and that in a few weeks or months, you may perhaps be called upon to exhibit to your God a faithful account of your every action even to thoughtless words, as I am soon to do myself. Look well to your worldly affairs and to our children; and set them a worthy example yourself; upon this subject, consult Madame Marillac, and Madame Cousté. Have as many prayers said for me as you can, and be sure that I die yours and yours only, D'Aubray."

The doctor read the letter attentively, and observed to the marchioness that one sentence was injudicious and unseemly, referring to that in which she spoke of her enemies.

"Madame," he said, "you have no other enemies than

your own crimes, and they whom you call your enemies are they who revere the memory of your father and your brothers, which ought to be dearer to you than to anyone else."

"But, Monsieur," the marchioness replied, "are not they who have hounded me to death my enemies, and is it not Christianlike on my part to forgive them?"

"Madame, they are not your enemies. You are the enemy of mankind, and no one can be called your enemy; for it is impossible to think of your crime without horror."

"For that reason, my father, I bear them no ill-will, and I should be glad to see them who helped to arrest me and to bring me where I am, in Paradise."

"What do you mean me to understand by that, Madame?" queried the doctor. "That is the way people sometimes talk when they hope for the death of a person. Pray explain yourself."

"Heaven forbid that I should be understood in any such way! On the contrary I pray God to grant them a long and prosperous life in this world, and infinite glory and unalloyed bliss in the other. Dictate a letter for me, I beg you, Monsieur; I will write whatever you think best."

When the letter was rewritten, the marchioness recurred to her confession, and requested the doctor to take the pen:

"For," said she, "I have committed so many sins and so many crimes, that if I were to make a simple verbal confession, I should never be sure that I had told the whole story."

Thereupon they both knelt to ask the blessing of the Holy Spirit, and after he had repeated the *Veni, Creator*, and the *Salve Regina*, the doctor rose, and took a seat at

the table, while the marchioness, still kneeling, repeated the *Confiteor*, and began her confession.

At nine in the evening, Père Chavigny, the same who brought Doctor Pirot thither in the morning, entered the room; the prisoner seemed annoyed at his visit, but received him pleasantly.

"My father," she said, "I did not expect to see you at this late hour, but I beg you to leave me alone with Monsieur a few moments more."

The priest withdrew.

"Why has he come?" she asked the doctor.

"It is better that you should not be left alone," he replied.

"Do you mean that you are going to leave me?" cried the marchioness, in a state of mind bordering closely upon terror.

"Madame, I will do whatever you wish, but you will do me a great service if you will allow me to go home for a few hours; Père Chavigny will stay with you meanwhile."

"Ah! Monsieur," she cried, wringing her hands, "you promised not to leave me until the last moment, and here you propose to go away now! Remember that I never saw you until this morning, but since then you have come to fill a larger place in my heart than any one of my former friends."

"I am anxious to do just what you would have me. If I ask you to let me take a little rest, it is only so that I can resume my duties to-morrow morning with more vigor, and be of more service to you than I can otherwise hope to be. If I have no rest at all, whatever I may say or do will lack energy. You anticipate the execution of your sentence to-morrow; I do not know whether you are right, but, by your own reckoning to-morrow will be the great, the critical day of your whole life, and we

shall both need all the strength we can command. We have been together now some thirteen or fourteen hours, laboring to ensure your salvation; I am by no means robust, and there is great danger, Madame, that if you do not give me a little time to myself, I shall not be able to stay with you to-morrow until the end."

"Monsieur," the marchioness replied, "what you say closes my mouth. To-morrow will be a much more important day for me than to-day, and I was wrong to insist; you must have rest to-night. Only let us first read over what you have written."

The doctor complied, and was then about to withdraw, but just at that moment supper was brought in, and Madame de Brinvilliers would not allow him to go until he had eaten something. While he hastily swallowed a mouthful, she told the concierge to order a carriage, and put it down to her account. She herself ate a plate of soup and two fresh eggs. In a very short time the concierge returned and said that the carriage was ready; the doctor thereupon took his leave, promising to pray for her and to be at the Conciergerie in the morning at six o'clock.

When he re-entered the tower in the morning, he found Père Chavigny kneeling by her side and just finishing a prayer. The priest was weeping, but the marchioness was still steadfast, and received him with the same expression that her face wore when they parted. As soon as Père Chavigny caught sight of the doctor, he withdrew. The marchioness besought him to pray for her, and tried to make him promise to return; but he would not bind himself to do so.

Then the marchioness ran to meet the doctor:

"You are punctual, Monsieur," she said, "and I cannot complain that you have failed to keep your word;

but oh! *mon Dieu!* how I have been longing for you, and how the hours have dragged; I thought six o'clock would never strike."

"I am here, Madame; and, first of all, how did you pass the night?"

"I wrote three letters, which took a long while, although they were very short: one was to my sister, one to Madame de Marillac and the third to M. Cousté. I should have liked to show them to you, but Père Chavigny volunteered to take charge of them, and as he saw no objection to them I did not dare to show any hesitancy about letting him have them. When my letters were all written, we talked together a little and prayed a little; after that, when the father had taken up his breviary to read the offices, and I my rosary, to tell my beads, I began to feel very weary, and asked him if I might not lie down for a little while; upon his replying in the affirmative I slept for two hours quietly and dreamlessly. When I awoke we said a few more prayers together, and were just finishing when you came in."

"Very well, Madame," said the doctor; "if you please we will go on with them; kneel beside me and let us repeat the *Veni Sancti Spiritus.*

The marchioness did as she was bid, and repeated the invocation with much pious fervor. When it was at an end, M. Pirot was about to take the pen again for her to continue her confession, but she interposed.

"Monsieur," she said, "let me first submit to your judgment a question which is causing me great anxiety. Yesterday you caused me to feel great hope in God's mercy, but I have not the presumption to hope that I can be saved without a long stay in purgatory; my crime is too atrocious for me to obtain forgiveness on any other

conditions, and, even though I may love my God with a love surpassing belief, I cannot expect to be received in heaven without passing through the fire which purifies, and without undergoing the punishment which my sins deserve. But I have heard it said Monsieur, that the fire which burns in that place, to which men's souls are temporarily consigned, is in every respect similar to the fire of hell, where souls burn forever and ever; tell me then, I implore you, how a soul, which awakes in purgatory immediately after its separation from the body, can be sure that it is not in hell, and that the fire which burns without consuming it will be extinguished sooner or later, when the torture which it suffers is identical with that suffered by the damned, and the flames which encompass it are identical with the fire of hell? I would like to know that, Monsieur, so that I may not be tormented by doubt at this awful moment, and may be sure at first sight whether I may hope, or must despair."

"You are quite right, Madame," the doctor replied, "and God is too just to add the torture of doubt to the punishment He inflicts upon you. At the very moment of separation between the soul and the body, the soul comes up for judgment before God; it hears from Him the sentence which condemns, or the blessed word which absolves; it knows whether pardon is accorded, or whether its sins are unpardonable; it learns whether it is to be cast into hell forever, or is simply to pass some time in purgatory. You will hear God's judgment pronounced, Madame, the instant that the executioner's blade touches your flesh, unless, indeed you have been already purified by the sacred flame of His love, and so go at once, without passing through purgatory, to receive the reward of your martyrdom among the blessed ones who surround the heavenly throne."

"Monsieur," the marchioness rejoined, "I have so much faith in what you say, that it seems to me I can hear now what you describe to me, and I am content."

Thereupon she resumed her confession which was left unfinished the night before. During the night she had recalled several matters which she added to what she had already confessed, and then they went on, the doctor stopping her from time to time when she told of some particularly heinous crime, to make her do penance for it.

After an hour and a half passed in this way, she was ordered to descend to the torture-chamber where the prosecutor was waiting to read her sentence to her. She listened to the order calmly, remaining on her knees, and simply turning her head.

"In a moment," she said, without a tremor in her voice; "Monsieur and I have a word more to say, then I am at your service."

She continued to dictate her confession to the doctor with perfect tranquillity until it was at an end. Then she asked him to pray with her that God would give her grace to make manifest to the judges whom she had scandalized a spirit of repentance equal to her past effrontery. When the prayer was finished she took her cloak, and a prayer book which Père Chavigny had left with her, and followed the concierge to the torture-chamber, where the sentence was to be read.

In the first place she was questioned for five hours, and told all that she had promised to tell, denying that she had any accomplices, and stoutly maintaining that she knew nothing of the composition of the poisons which she administered, nor of the antidote which would neutralize them. When the judges saw that they could extract nothing more from her, they made a sign to the

prosecutor to read her sentence which she listened to, standing. It was in these words:

"The *Grandes Chambres* and *Tournelles* of Parliament, sitting as a court of justice; in the matter of D'Aubray de Brinvilliers, the judgment of the *procureur-general du roi* (the said D'Aubray having been questioned as to the facts of her said cause), is that the court has declared and does declare the said D'Aubray duly accused and convicted of having caused the death by poison of Master Dreux d'Aubray, her father, and of MM. d'Aubray, one being civil lieutenant, and the other a counsellor of parliament, her two brothers, and of having attempted to murder her sister; and has decreed and does decree that the said D'Aubray de Brinvilliers be punished therefor by making public apology in front of the principal door of the church of Paris, whither she will be taken in a cart, bare-footed, with a rope around her neck, and holding in her hand a lighted torch weighing two pounds; there, on her knees, to make confession of the fact that she did poison her father and brothers, and attempt the life of her sister, wilfully and maliciously, in a spirit of vengeance, and to gain possession of their property; that she repents thereof, and asks pardon of God, the king and outraged justice; this done, that she be taken in said cart to the Place de Grève, there to have her head cut off upon a scaffold which will be erected in said square for that purpose, after which her body will be burned and the ashes scattered to the winds; the court further decrees that she be first compelled to undergo the ordinary and extraordinary question to force her to reveal her accomplices; declares that she forfeited her right to inherit the property of her said father, brothers and sister from the day said crimes were committed by her, and that all property acquired by her

from any source be confiscated to its lawful owners, less the sum of four thousand livres to be paid as a fine to the king; four hundred livres to pay for masses to be said for the repose of the souls of her deceased victims in the chapel of the Conciergerie; ten thousand livres by way of reparation to Madame Maugot, and all the costs of the prosecution, and of the prosecution of Amelin, called Lachaussée.

"Done in Parliament, this sixteenth of July, 1676."

The marchioness listened to the reading without indication of fear or weakness. When it was at an end she said to the functionary:

"Will you have the kindness to read it once more, Monsieur; I was so moved by the mention of the cart, which I did not anticipate, that I paid little attention to the rest."

Her request was complied with; after that she was properly in the hands of the executioner, and that official approached her. She recognized him by the cord which he held in his hands, and she at once held out her own hands to him, scrutinizing him from head to foot without uttering a word. The judges thereupon retired one after another, disclosing as they did so the various implements of torture. The marchioness gazed without wincing upon the wooden horses and rings which had distended so many limbs, and caused so many shrieks of agony; when her eyes fell upon the three pails of water which were all ready for her, she turned to the prosecutor, not wishing to speak to the executioner, and said with a smile:

"All that water must have been brought here for the purpose of drowning me, Monsieur; you have no idea, I trust, of making a person of my small stature swallow it all."

The executioner, without reply, removed her cloak, and her other garments, one after another, until she was entirely naked; then he led her to the wall, and made her sit down upon the wooden horse used in the ordinary question, which was two feet high.

She was then asked once more to give the names of her accomplices, to disclose the composition of the poison, and its proper antidote; but she made the same reply as before, adding simply:

"If you do not believe what I say, my body is in your hands, and you can torture it to your heart's content."

Thereupon the clerk motioned to the executioner to do his duty.

He began by fastening the culprit's feet to two rings fastened to the floor side by side, directly in front of her; then he threw her backwards and made her hands fast to rings in the wall some three feet apart. Thus her head was about on a level with her feet, while the horse, resting under her back, bent her body into the shape of a crescent, as if it were bound upon a wheel. In order to stretch her limbs more effectually, the executioner took a turn or two on a winch which forced her feet some six inches nearer the rings.

At this point we allow the official report to speak for us once more:

"Upon the small horse, during the tightening of the cords, she said several times:

"'O *Mon Dieu!* they are murdering me, and yet I have told the truth.'

"Water was poured down her throat;* she struggled and writhed violently, and said:

*The introduction of water into the mouth was accomplished in this way: The executioner had by his side, for use in the ordinary question,

"'You are killing me.'

"Being thereupon admonished to name her accomplices, she said that she had none except a man, who had asked her, ten years gone, for poison with which to put his wife out of the way, and that he was dead.

"Water was poured down her throat; she struggled and writhed a little, but refused to speak.

"Being admonished to tell why, if she had no accomplice, she wrote from the Conciergerie to Penautier, to urge him to do all that he could for her, and to remind him that his interests in this matter were identical with hers, she said that she never knew that Penautier had been in league with Sainte-Croix in the matter of poisons, and that to say the contrary would be to give the lie to her conscience; but as a note of Penautier's was found in Sainte-Croix's casket, and as she had seen him often with Sainte-Croix, it had occurred to her that the intimacy which existed between them might have embraced the subject of poisons; that, with that thought in her mind, she ventured to write to Penautier as if she were sure that it was so, as her own cause could not possibly be injured thereby; for, either Penautier was Sainte-Croix's accomplice, or he was not; if he was, he would think that she was on the point of making an

four vessels filled with water, and containing about two pints and a half each; for the extraordinary question, eight vessels of the same size, making in the first instance ten and in the second twenty pints of water, which the accused was forced to swallow. The executioner held in his hand a horn which would hold the contents of one of the vessels; he put the small end in the culprit's mouth, and after each two pints and a half stopped pouring for a moment to give him an opportunity to confess, but if he continued to deny, continued the operation until the eight vessels were exhausted. It often happened that the sufferer clinched his teeth to resist the torture as long as he could; at such times the executioner would close his nose by squeezing it between the thumb and forefinger, thereby forcing him to open his mouth to breathe, whereupon the executioner would seize the moment to thrust the horn in.

accusation against him, and would do all he could to extricate her from the hands of the law; if he was not, her letter was a letter wasted, and that was all.

"Again water was poured down her throat; she struggled and writhed violently, but insisted that upon that subject she could say nothing different from what she had already said; for if she did say anything different, her conscience would reproach her for it."

The machinery of the ordinary question was exhausted; the marchioness had already swallowed half of the water which had seemed sufficient to drown her. The executioner made ready at once to proceed to the extraordinary question; a horse three feet and a half in height was placed beneath her loins instead of the lower one, thereby giving a much greater sweep to her body; and as the change was made without lengthening the cords, the limbs were stretched still more, and the cords cut into the flesh about the wrists and ankles until the blood flowed freely. The torture was at once renewed, interrupted only by the questions of the clerk and the replies of the victim; as to her cries, it was as if nobody heard them.

"Upon the large horse, and while the cords were being tightened, she said many times:

"'O *Mon Dieu!* you are tearing me apart! O Lord, forgive me! O Lord, have mercy on me!'

"Being asked if she had nothing else to say as to her accomplices, she said that they might destroy her body, but that she would not tell a falsehood which would destroy her soul.

"Whereupon water was poured down her throat; she struggled and writhed a little, but would not speak.

"Being admonished to reveal the composition of her poisons, and their proper antidote, she said that she did

not know the ingredients; that all she remembered was that toads entered into the concoction of them in some way; that Sainte-Croix had never revealed the secret; that her opinion was that he did not make them himself, but that they were made by Glazer; that she thought she could remember that some of them were simply rarefied arsenic; that she knew no other antidote than milk, and that Sainte-Croix had told her that if one had taken milk in the morning, and drank a small glass of it as soon as he felt the first symptoms of poisoning, there was nothing to fear.

"Being admonished to tell whatever else she had to tell, she said that she had disclosed everything that she knew, and that they might kill her now, but there was nothing more to be forced from her.

"Whereupon water was again poured down her throat; she writhed a little, and said that she was dying, but that was all.

"Again the water was poured down her throat; she writhed and struggled violently, but did not speak.

"Once more the water was poured down her throat; she neither struggled nor writhed, but said with a deep groan:

"'O *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* I am dead!'

"More than this she did not say.

"Whereupon, without other punishment, she was unbound, taken from the horse, and placed before the fire in the customary way."

Lying upon a mattress in front of the fire-place in the apartment of the concierge, the doctor found her; he had felt that he lacked strength to endure the spectacle of the torture, and had asked her consent to leave her and pass the time praying to God to give her patience and courage.

We have seen that the worthy priest did not pray in vain.

"Ah! Monsieur," said the marchioness, as soon as she perceived him, "for a long time I have been aching to see you, and to seek comfort from you. The torture was very long and very painful; but it was my last transaction with men, and I now have only God to think of. Look at my hands, Monsieur, and my feet; are they not torn and bleeding, and did not my executioners wound me in the same parts in which Christ was wounded?"

"For that reason, Madame, your suffering at this moment is a blessing; every pang takes you one step nearer heaven. As you justly say, you must now think only of God; you must concentrate all your thoughts and all your hopes upon Him; you must beseech Him, as the penitent king did, to give you a place among His elect in heaven; and as nothing impure can enter there, let us labor, Madame, to wash away all the stains which might bar the way to you."

The marchioness at once rose, with the doctor's assistance, for she could hardly stand, and walked with faltering step between him and the executioner; for that official, who had taken possession of her as soon as the sentence was pronounced, was not to leave her again until his duties were fully performed. All three entered the chapel, and the doctor and his penitent knelt in the choir. At that moment a number of curiosity-seekers appeared in the nave of the chapel, and as they had a perfect right to be there, but their presence annoyed and distracted the marchioness, the executioner closed the door of the choir, and suggested that the sufferer should seek shelter behind the altar. There she sat down upon a chair and the doctor took his place upon a bench on the other side facing her. Then for the first time, as the

light fell upon her through the window of the chapel, did he discern the change which had taken place in her. Her face, ordinarily very pale, was deeply flushed, her eyes were gleaming with fever, and her whole body was shaken with nervous shuddering. The doctor tried to find some words of consolation to say to her, but she burst forth, without listening to him:

"Monsieur, do you know that my sentence is ignominious and infamous? Do you know that I am to be burned?"

The doctor did not reply; but, thinking that she needed a stimulant, he told the executioner to bring wine. A moment later the gaoler appeared, with a glass of wine in his hand; the doctor handed it to the marchioness, who moistened her lips, and at once handed it back to him. Remembering that her throat was bare she put up her handkerchief to cover it, and asked the gaoler for a pin. He was a long while giving it to her, pretending to look for one on his clothes, and she thought that he feared she would try to choke herself with it.

"Ah!" she said, shaking her head with a sad smile, "you have nothing to fear now; Monsieur here will be my surety that I have no design upon my own life."

"Madame," said the gaoler, handing her what she desired, "I ask your pardon for making you wait. I was not suspicious of you, I give you my word; if any one has that feeling, it is not I."

With that he threw himself on his knees at her feet, and begged her to give him her hand to kiss. She gave it at once, and told him to pray for her soul.

"Yes, yes!" he cried, sobbing, "indeed, I will, and with all my heart."

She pinned the handkerchief as best she could with

her bound hands, and then, as the gaoler had withdrawn and left her alone with the doctor:

"Did you not hear me, Monsieur?" she said to him a second time; "I told you that my sentence says that I am to be burned. Burned! Do you understand? Although my body is not to be cast into the fire until after my death, it nevertheless makes my memory infamous. I am spared the agony of being burned alive, and in that way, perhaps, I may be enabled to die without breaking down; but it is shameful, none the less, and it is the shame I am thinking of now."

"Madame," said the doctor, "so far as your salvation is concerned, it makes no difference, whatever, whether your body is thrown into the fire to be reduced to ashes, or laid in the earth to be devoured by worms; whether it is dragged on a hurdle and thrown into the sewer, or embalmed with all the perfumes of the Orient, and deposited in a sumptuous tomb. Whatever disposition is made of it, it will rise again at the appointed day, and will rise with the greater glory from its ashes, than many a royal corpse which lies sleeping at this moment in a golden casket. Pompous obsequies are for the benefit of those who survive, Madame, and not of those who die."

As the doctor ceased to speak, there was a noise at the door of the choir, and he went to see what occasioned it. There was a man there who insisted upon entering, and had almost come to blows with the executioner. The doctor asked who he was, and learned that he was a saddler from whom Madame de Brinvilliers had purchased a carriage before she left France; she had paid him part of the price but still owed him twelve hundred livres. He brought the note she gave him, upon which the different sums she had paid him on account were faithfully endorsed.

As she did not know what was going on, she called, and the doctor and the executioner went to her.

"Have they come for me already?" she said; "I am but ill prepared as yet; but no matter, I am ready."

The doctor reassured her and told her who was at the door.

"The man is quite right," she said; "tell him," she continued, speaking to the executioner, "that I will do the best I can."

As the executioner turned away, she said to the doctor:

"Monsieur, must we go now? It would be a great favor to me if they would give me a little more time, for although, as I said just now, I am ready, I am not prepared. Pardon me, my father," she continued, "but the torture and the sentence have upset me completely; that fire which is mentioned in the sentence is blazing away before my eyes like the fire of hell. If I had been left alone with you all the time it would have been much better for my salvation."

"Madame," the doctor replied, "we probably have till night, God be thanked, to restore your tranquillity, and to do what remains for you to do."

"Oh! Monsieur," she said, with a smile, "do not believe that; they will not be so considerate for a poor wretch who is sentenced to be burned; unfortunately it is not for us to say. When everything is ready, they will come and tell us that it is time, and we must go."

"Madame," the doctor rejoined, "I can promise you that the necessary respite will be granted."

"No, no," she said in an abrupt, feverish tone. "I don't choose to make them wait for me. When the cart is at the door, they will have but to tell me, and I will go down."

"Madame, I would not delay you if I thought you were ready to appear before God, for, in your situation, it would be an act of charity not to ask for further delay, but to set out when the hour strikes; but all people are not so well prepared that they can afford to do like Christ, who ceased to pray, and aroused His apostles, to go forth from the garden and meet His enemies. You at this moment are weak and faltering, and if they should come now to take you, I should remonstrate against it."

"Don't be disturbed, Madame, the time has not come," said the executioner, looking around the corner of the altar; he had overheard the conversation, and thought that the marchioness would deem his testimony convincing, and would be reassured by it; "there is no hurry and we can't go for two or three hours."

This assurance restored Madame de Brinvilliers' tranquillity to some extent, and she thanked the executioner. Then she turned again to the doctor.

"Monsieur," said she, "here is a rosary which I should like not to have fall into that man's hands; it is not that I fear he will not make good use of it, for, notwithstanding their profession, I suppose he and his kind are Christians like ourselves, are they not? But still I should prefer to leave it to somebody else."

"Tell me, Madame, to whom you wish me to give it, and I will do with it accordingly."

"Alas! Monsieur, there is no one for me to give it to but my sister, and I am afraid that she will remember my crime against her, and shudder at the thought of touching anything that belonged to me. If she should be willing to take it, however, it would be a very great consolation to me to think that she will carry it after my death, and that the sight of it will remind her that

she must pray for me; but after what has taken place between us, the rosary would probably remind her of nothing that was not hateful to think of. *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* I am indeed a miserable sinner; canst thou ever deign to forgive me?"

"Madame," said the doctor, "I think that you are wrong regarding Mademoiselle d'Aubray; you have learned what her feelings are toward you from the letter she wrote you. Pray, therefore, upon this rosary, until the last moment; pray without thought for anything but your prayers, as befits the repentant criminal, and I promise you, Madame, that I will put it into her hands myself, and that she will be overjoyed to receive it."

Thereupon the marchioness, whose mind had constantly wandered from her devotions since she underwent the torture, yielded to the patient, untiring tenderness of the doctor, and began to pray with as much fervor as before.

She prayed thus until seven o'clock. As the clock was striking, the executioner came and stood in front of her, without a word; she understood that the time had come, and exclaimed, seizing the doctor's arm:

"Just a little more time, just a few moments, I implore you."

"Madame," said the doctor, rising, "let us worship the blood of Christ in His blessed sacrament, and beseech Him to wipe away all the stains of sin that still remain upon your soul; thus you will obtain the respite you desire."

The executioner tightened the cords around her wrists which until then he had left so loose that they almost slipped off, and she walked with a firm step to the altar, and knelt between the chaplain of the Conciergerie and

the doctor. The chaplain was in his vestments, and he intoned aloud the *Veni, Creator*, the *Salve Regina*, and the *Tautum ergo*, and thereafter administered the holy communion, which she received on her knees, and with her face to the floor.

She then left the chapel, supported on the left by the doctor, and on the right by the servant of the executioner, who went before to make ready the shirt worn by those who were to suffer death. Ten or twelve people were standing about the door as she came out, and she then for the first time showed signs of weakness. When she saw the bystanders she fell back a step, and with her bound hands pulled the front part of her cap down so as to hide half of her face. In a moment they passed through a gate which closed behind them, so that she was alone once more, between that gate and another, with the doctor and the servant.

The string of her rosary was broken by the sudden movement she made to hide her face, and some of the beads fell on the floor, but she kept on without noticing them. The doctor called her attention, and he and the executioner's servant stooped and began picking them up; the latter took them all in his hand, and poured them into the prisoner's. She thanked him humbly for the courtesy: "Monsieur," said she, "I know that I have now no possessions in this world, that all I have upon me belongs to you, and that I can dispose of nothing except with your consent; but I entreat you to permit me to give this rosary to Monsieur before I die; you will not lose much, for it is not intrinsically valuable, and I have no other purpose in giving it to him, than to send it through him to my sister. Say that I may dispose of it in that way, Monsieur, I implore you."

"Madame," the servant replied, "although custom

gives us all the clothes of those who are condemned to death, you can make what disposition you please of anything you have."

The doctor, upon whose arm the marchioness was leaning, felt her shudder at this courteous treatment from a mere servant, which was naturally the most humiliating thing imaginable for one of her haughty disposition; but her emotion was all internal, and her face betrayed no sign of it.

By this time they had reached the outer vestibule of the Conciergerie, between the courtyard and the first door, and there she was made to sit down, that she might be put in proper condition to make her public apology. As every step which she took thenceforth brought her so much nearer the scaffold, every incident, however slight, caused her the greatest alarm. She looked around with a shudder of apprehension, and saw the executioner standing with a shirt in his hand. At that moment the door of the vestibule was thrown open, and some fifty or more persons appeared, among them Madame la Comtesse de Soissons, Madame du Refuge, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, M. de Roquelaure, and M. l'Abbé de Chimay. When she saw them the marchioness flushed purple with shame; she leaned over to the doctor: "Monsieur," she asked, "is that man going to undress me again, as he did in the torture chamber? All these preliminaries are very cruel and turn my thoughts away from God, in spite of myself."

The executioner heard her words, low as they were spoken, and reassured her by telling her that the shirt would be put on over her other clothing. Thereupon he went up to her, so that she was between him and his servant, and could not speak to the doctor, but could only express by her glances how deeply she felt the

ignominy of her situation. When he had put the shirt upon her—an operation for which he had to unbind her hands, he raised the cap which she had pulled down, as we have said, and knotted it around her neck; next he bound her hands again with a cord, and tied one end around her neck and the other to her waist, then knelt in front of her and removed her stockings and her shoes.

She held out her hands to the doctor:

"Oh! Monsieur," she said, "in God's name, see what they are doing to me; I implore you to come and give me some comfort."

The doctor at once went up to her, drew her head against his breast, and tried to find consoling words to say to her; but she exclaimed in a heart-rending voice, glancing at the crowd of people who were feasting their eyes upon her:

"Oh! Monsieur, is it not a strange and barbarous sort of curiosity?"

"Madame," the doctor replied, with tears in his eyes, "do not look upon these persons as embodiments of curiosity and inhumanity, even though they may fairly be so considered, but look upon them as sent by God to add to the shame which is to expiate your crimes. Christ, who was innocent of all wrong-doing, was made to submit to far worse indignity, and yet He welcomed it with joy; for, as Tertullean, has said, He was a victim who fattened through sheer delight in suffering."

As the doctor finished the executioner put the lighted torch in the culprit's hands, to be carried by her to Nôtre Dame, where she was to make public apology; but as it was very heavy, weighing two pounds, the doctor took hold of it with his right hand; and while the clerk read the sentence a second time, he did his best

to prevent her hearing it, by talking to her all the while of God. But she turned so ghastly when the clerk was reading these words: "Whither she will be taken in a cart, bare-footed, with a rope around her neck, and holding in her hand a lighted torch, weighing two pounds;" that the doctor could not doubt that she heard them notwithstanding his endeavors. It was much worse when she reached the door of the vestibule and caught sight of the great crowd waiting in the courtyard. She stopped, her face working convulsively, and dropped as if she wished to bury her feet in the ground.

"Monsieur," she said to the doctor, with a wild, but plaintive, expression; "Monsieur, can it be possible that M. de Brinvilliers will have so little feeling as to wish to live after what is happening now?"

"Madame, when our Lord was ready to leave His disciples, He did not pray God to take them out of the world, but to keep them from falling into vice. 'Father,' He said, 'I do not ask Thee to take them from the world, but to preserve them from evil.' If then, Madame, you ask anything at God's hand concerning M. de Brinvilliers, let it be only this—that He will retain him in His good graces, if He has already taken him in, and that He will extend his favor to him if He has not already done so."

But his words were of no avail; for the moment her shame was too great and too public; her eyebrows contracted, her eyes shot fire, her whole expression was terrible to look upon, and the devil reappeared for an instant through the thin envelope which concealed him. It was during this paroxysm, which lasted perhaps a quarter of an hour, that Lebrun, who was near her, was so impressed by her face, and carried away such a vivid recollection of it, that the following night, being unable to sleep because her features were constantly before his

eyes, he made the fine sketch, which is now at the Louvre, and in close juxtaposition to it drew the head of a tiger, to show that the principal features were identical in the two, and the resemblance very striking.

The delay on the threshold of the vestibule was occasioned by the great crowd in the courtyard, which barred all movement until mounted archers forced a passage through,—for the marchioness and those accompanying her. The doctor placed a crucifix in her hand and commanded her not to take her eyes from it, so that she should not be excited anew by the sight of the concourse. She did as she was told until she reached the gate opening into the street, where the cart was waiting; there she could not help raising her eyes to look at the infamous object which stood before her.

It was one of the smallest tumbrils that were made, and still bore traces of the mud and stones which it had been used to draw; there was no seat, and nothing but a little straw on the bottom; it was drawn by a wretched horse, marvelously well adapted to make the equipage as ignominious as possible.

The executioner made her enter first, which she did quickly and without assistance, as if to fly from the eyes which were fastened upon her; and she crouched like a wild beast in the left-hand corner, turning her back to the crowd. The doctor followed her and sat by her side in the right-hand corner; then the executioner climbed in, put the board up behind, and sat upon it, stretching his legs out between the doctor's. The servant, whose function it was to drive, sat at the forward end, with his back to the doctor and the culprit, and one foot on each shaft. Thus did Madame de Brinvilliers set out for Nôtre Dame, and thus we can understand how it was

that Madame de Sévigné, who was on the Pont Nôtre Dame with Madame Descars, saw nothing but a cap.*

The cart had gone but a few steps when the culprit's face, which had become somewhat less troubled, was again convulsed; her eyes, which had been glued to the crucifix, wandered over the crowd, and at once took on a strange, wild expression which alarmed the doctor; he saw that something had happened to excite her, and in his anxiety to maintain her tranquillity asked her what she had seen.

"Nothing, Monsieur, nothing," she said hastily, meeting the doctor's gaze, "nothing at all."

"Why, Madame," he rejoined, "you cannot contradict your eyes, and they have had a fire in them, for a moment past, so different from the fire of resignation and charity, that it must have been caused by the sight of some abhorrent object. What is it? Tell me, pray, for you promised to let me know whenever you were tempted."

"I will tell you, Monsieur, but it is nothing." Suddenly she looked at the executioner, who, as we have said, was facing the doctor, and exclaimed:

"Monsieur, Monsieur, sit in front of me, I beseech you, and hide me from that man!"

She pointed with her fettered hands toward a man who was following the cart on horseback; as she did so, she let go her hold upon the torch, which the doctor was also holding, and upon the crucifix, which fell among the straw.

The executioner looked behind, and then changed his position as she requested, muttering, with a nod, "Yes, yes, I understand."

The doctor repeated his question.

*Letter LXIX.

"Monsieur," said she, "it is nothing worth telling you, and it is very weak in me to be unable to endure the sight of one who used me ill. That man close behind the cart is Desgrais, who arrested me at Liège, and treated me so badly during the whole journey to Paris, that I could not control myself when I first caught sight of him."

"I have heard of him, Madame," the doctor replied, "and you spoke of him yourself in your confession. He was sent to capture you, and was responsible for you; his orders were strict, and he was right to keep near you, and maintain a close watch upon you; even if he had been more severe than he was, he would not have exceeded his instructions. Jesus Christ, Madame, could not look upon His executioners except as ministers of iniquity, who were executing the orders of an unjust judge, and who heaped upon Him all the indignities which came into their heads on the journey to the place of execution, and yet He was patient and gentle with them, and prayed for them with His dying breath."

Thereupon a sharp conflict took place in the culprit's heart, and was reflected upon her face; but it was only for a moment, and then her features resumed their former serenity.

"You are right, Monsieur," she said, "and I wrong myself by being so sensitive; I ask God's forgiveness, and I beg you to remember it when you give me absolution on the scaffold, as you have promised to do, so that I may be absolved from that as well as my other sins. Monsieur," she said to the executioner, "sit as you were before, so that I can see M. Desgrais."

The executioner hesitated about complying, but returned to his former position at a sign from the doctor. The marchioness gazed for some moments at Desgrais

with a wild expression upon her features, murmuring a prayer for him; then she fixed her eyes once more upon the crucifix, and resumed her prayers in her own behalf; this took place in front of the Church of Sainte-Geneviève des Ardens.

Meanwhile the tumbril, slowly as it moved, kept on its course, and came out at last at the Place de Nôtre Dame. The archers forced a passageway through the crowd which filled the square and the tumbril was driven to the cathedral steps. The executioner descended, removed the board, took the marchioness in his arms, and placed her on the ground; the doctor next alighted, with the cramp in his feet and legs from the constrained position they had been in all the way from the Conciergerie; he ascended the steps and took his place behind the marchioness, who was standing at the top with the clerk at her right, the executioner at her left, and behind her a great multitude of people who were in the church, all the doors having been thrown open. She was made to kneel and to take in her hands the lighted torch which the doctor had held most of the time thus far. Then the clerk read the words of the apology, which were written upon a paper he held in his hand; she began to repeat them after him, but in so low a voice that the executioner almost shouted, "Speak like Monsieur, and repeat it all after him. Louder! louder!"

With that she raised her voice, and repeated the following words in unfaltering tones, and with deep earnestness:

"I confess that I poisoned my father and my brothers, and attempted to poison my sister, wilfully and revengefully, and in order to obtain their property; I implore the forgiveness of God, the king and justice."

This ceremony at an end, the executioner lifted her into the cart again, without the torch; the doctor and

the others took their places as before, and the cart rumbled away toward the Place de Grève. From that moment until she reached the scaffold the marchioness did not once take her eyes from the crucifix which the doctor held before her with his left hand, exhorting her with words of pious consolation, and trying to keep her attention distracted from the ominous mutterings which arose on all sides, and among which it was easy to distinguish bitter maledictions.

The tumbril stopped a short distance from the scaffold on the Place de Grève, and the clerk, M. Dronet, rode forward on horseback, and said to the prisoner:

"Madame, have you anything to say more than you have said? for if you have any declaration to make, Messieurs, the twelve commissioners, are at the Hotel de Ville, ready to listen to you."

"You hear, Madame," said the doctor; "here we are, at the end of our journey, and your strength has not abandoned you by the way. God be thanked! Do not destroy the good effect of what you have already suffered, and of all that you have still to suffer, by concealing what you know, if, perchance, you do know anything more than you have told."

"I have told all that I know," she replied, "and I have nothing more to say."

"Repeat it aloud, then," rejoined the doctor, "so that everybody can hear."

Thereupon the marchioness said again, in the strongest voice she could command:

"I have told all that I know, and I have nothing more to say."

The crowd was so compact that the driver of the cart was utterly unable to force his horse any nearer to the scaffold, despite the blows which he dealt out liberally

on all sides with his whip; so the cart had to remain where it had stopped. The executioner had alighted and was putting the ladder in place.

During this awful moment of delay, the marchioness gazed calmly and gratefully at the doctor.

"Monsieur," she said, "we are not to part here; you promised not to leave me until my head was cut off! I hope you will keep your word."

"Of course I will, Madame, never fear; the instant of your death will mark our parting; do not be troubled about that, for I will not desert you."

"I expected as much of you," the marchioness rejoined, "and you promised too faithfully, I know, for me to have any fear that you would dream of breaking your promise. You must go upon the scaffold with me, and stand beside me, if you are willing. And now, Monsieur, as the time for our last farewell is approaching, and as the quantity of things I have to do upon the scaffold may lead me to overlook it, let me thank you now. If I am prepared to undergo the sentence of my earthly judges, and to listen to the sentence of the Judges of Heaven, I gratefully acknowledge, Monsieur, that I owe it all to you; it only remains for me, then, to apologize for the trouble I have caused you; I humbly ask your pardon for it."

The doctor's voice was choked by his sobs and he could not speak.

"You forgive me, do you not?" she said again, and the doctor tried to reassure her, but he knew that if he opened his mouth he should break down, so he said nothing; whereupon the marchioness said a third time: "I implore you to forgive me, Monsieur, and to think without regret of the time you have passed with me. You will repeat the *De Profundis* upon the scaffold just

as my head falls, and say a mass for me to-morrow; you promise that, do you not?"

"Yes, Madame," the doctor replied brokenly, "yes, yes, be sure that I will do whatever you ask."

At that moment the executioner removed the board and lifted the marchioness from the cart; and while he was leading her to the scaffold and all eyes were fastened upon them, the doctor seized the opportunity to weep for a moment behind his handkerchief, undetected; but, as he was wiping his eyes, the executioner's servant held out his hand to assist him to alight.

Meanwhile the marchioness was mounting the ladder under the guidance of the executioner, and when she reached the platform he made her kneel in front of a block which lay across it. Thereupon the doctor, who had ascended the ladder with a step less firm than hers, kneeled at her side, with his face turned so that he could whisper in her ear; that is to say, the marchioness was facing the river, and the doctor the Hotel de Ville.

They had no sooner taken their positions than the executioner removed the culprit's cap and cut off her hair behind and at the sides, turning her head around this way and that, sometimes very roughly; but, although this ghastly toilet was nearly half an hour in the making, she made no complaint, and gave no other indication of suffering than was conveyed by the great tears which rolled silently down her cheeks. When her hair was satisfactorily arranged, he laid bare her neck and shoulders by tearing away the upper part of the shirt he threw over her other clothing when she left the Conciergerie. Finally, he bandaged her eyes, and, lifting her chin with his hand, told her to hold her head erect. She obeyed without hesitation, listening all the while to what the doctor was saying in her ear, and repeating from time to

LA MARQUISE DE BRINVILLIERS

The execution of the Marquise de Brinvilliers.

J. WAGREZ

time such of his words as seemed particularly appropriate to her situation.

Meanwhile, the executioner, standing at the rear of the scaffold, near the funeral-pile, let his eyes rest now and then upon his cloak, through the folds of which could be seen the hilt of a long, straight sword, which he had taken pains to hide so that Madame de Brinvilliers might not see it when mounting the scaffold.

The doctor, after giving the marchioness absolution, looked around and seeing that the executioner had not yet drawn his weapon, said these words, which she repeated after him:

"Jesus, son of David and Mary, have mercy upon me; Mary, daughter of David, and mother of Jesus, pray for me. Oh, my God, I yield my body, which is but dust, to men to burn, and to reduce to ashes, and dispose of as they please, with a steadfast faith that Thou wilt resurrect it some day, and unite it with my soul once more. I am troubled about my soul alone; grant, O God, that I may place it in Thy hand, do Thou receive it into Thy bosom, that it may return whence it came; it came from Thee, let it return to Thee; Thou wert its source and its beginning; be Thou also, Oh, my God, its end!"

As the marchioness repeated the last word the doctor heard a dull sound like that made by the butcher's cleaver upon the block; at the same instant the voice was silent. The blade had done its work so swiftly that the doctor did not even see a flash as it descended. He ceased to speak himself, with hair erect and a cold sweat upon his forehead; for, as the head did not fall, he thought that the executioner had missed his mark, and would be obliged to begin anew. But his fears on that score were short-lived, for the head, a second later, inclined to the left, slipped down upon the shoulder, and

rolled to the ground, while the body fell forward upon the block, which was so placed that the spectators could see the bleeding neck. On the instant the doctor repeated the *De Profundis*, as he had promised to do.

When the doctor had finished his prayer, he raised his head and saw the executioner standing in front of him, wiping his face.

"Well! Monsieur," he said, "wasn't that a good stroke? I always ask God's assistance on these occasions, and He never fails me. For some days this woman worried me; but I paid for six masses and then my hand and heart were strengthened.

Thereupon he felt under his cloak for a bottle and took a long draught from it; then he took the body, all clothed as it was, under one arm, and the head in the other hand, and threw them both upon the pile, to which his servant at once applied the match.

"The next day," says Madame de Sevigné, "there was great searching for Madame de Brinvilliers' bones, for people said that she was a saint in heaven."

In 1814 M. d'Offemont, father of the present proprietor of the chateau where the Marquise de Brinvilliers poisoned M. d'Aubray, alarmed by the approach of the allied troops, made several hiding-places in one of the towers, in which he concealed his plate and such other valuables as he had with him at the chateau, which stood quite by itself in the midst of the forest of Aigne. The troops were at Offemont more or less of the time for three months, and then withdrew across the frontier.

After that they ventured to take the different objects out of their hiding-places, and as they were sounding the walls for fear of forgetting something, they found

one spot which gave back a hollow sound, indicating the existence of a cavity which they knew nothing of. Pick-axes and crowbars were brought into requisition, and the removal of a few stones revealed a cabinet of considerable size, fitted up as a laboratory, and provided with furnaces, chemical apparatus, several phials hermetically sealed, and containing an unknown fluid, and, lastly, four packets of powder, of different colors.

Unfortunately the persons who made the discovery attached too much or too little importance to it, and instead of submitting the various substances to the investigations of modern scientific knowledge, they carefully destroyed packages and bottles, in mortal terror of the deadly preparations which they probably contained.

Thus was thrown away this accidental opportunity—probably the last that will ever occur—of analyzing the poisons of Sainte-Croix and the Marquise de Brinvilliers, and ascertaining the ingredients of which they were composed.

VANINKA.

VANINKA.

1800–1801.

On a certain afternoon toward the close of the reign of the Emperor Paul I., that is to say about the middle of the first year of the nineteenth century, as four o'clock was striking in the clock tower of the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, whose golden arrow overlooks the ramparts of the fortress, a considerable number of people of all conditions collected in front of the house of General Count Tchermayloff, ex-military commandant of a city of some importance in the district of Pultava. The first passers-by were led to stop by the preparations that were making in the middle of the courtyard for the application of the knout to one of the general's slaves, who filled the post of barber in his household.

Although the infliction of this species of punishment was far from uncommon at St. Petersburg, it, nevertheless, when done publicly, attracted the notice of almost all of those who passed through the street or in front of the house where it was to take place. This it was, then, that had happened on this occasion, and had caused the assemblage in front of General Tchermayloff's house.

The spectators, however impatient they might have been, had no right to complain that they were made to wait, for the clock had not struck the half-hour when a young man of twenty-four to twenty-six, dressed in the resplendent uniform of an aide-de-camp, appeared at the top of the little flight of steps at the end of the courtyard, leading to the main building, which faced the great

gate, and in which the general's apartments were located. He stopped there an instant, fixed his eyes upon a window, whose closely drawn curtains left him no opportunity to satisfy his curiosity, whatever its object might be. Then seeing it would be a mere waste of time to look in that direction, he waved his hand to a man with a beard, who stood near a door opening into the servant's quarters. The door was at once thrown open, and the culprit came forth, surrounded by his fellow-serfs, who were compelled to be present at the spectacle for the sake of the example. He was, as we have said, the general's barber, and was followed by the one who was to inflict the punishment, and who was no other than the coachman; he was so accustomed to applying the whip that he was promoted, or debased as you choose, to the post of executioner, whenever this species of execution took place; it was a post, however, which in no way lessened the esteem or affection of his comrades, for they knew full well that Ivan's heart was not in his work, but that his arm alone was concerned in it. Now, inasmuch as his arm, like all the rest of his body, was the general's property, and the general therefore could do whatever seemed good to him with it, they were in no way surprised that he put it to that use. More than that, the punishment when inflicted by Ivan was almost always milder than it would have been had the knout been wielded by another. For it sometimes happened that Ivan would pilfer one or two blows out of the dozen, or if he was forced by the aide who superintended the punishment to count with greater accuracy, he would manage to have the end of the lash strike the spruce plank upon which the culprit was laid, thereby making the blow much less painful. And so, when it was Ivan's turn to lie at full length on the dreaded plank, and

receive on his own account the correction he was accustomed to administer, the one who played for the moment the part of executioner showed the same consideration for him that he showed for others, and remembered only the blows that he omitted, and not those he delivered. This exchange of courtesies was productive of a very real affection between Ivan and his comrades, which was never so pronounced as when the knout was to be administered anew. To be sure the first hour following the punishment was ordinarily one of agony, and so under those circumstances the knouted was sometimes a little unjust to the knouter. But it rarely happened that the grudge was not forgotten before evening, or that the ill-feeling endured beyond the first glass of eau-de-vie that the executioner drank to his victim's health.

The man upon whom Ivan was to display his skill on this occasion, was some thirty-five or six years of age, with red hair and beard, rather above middle height; his Greek origin was apparent in his glance, which, although it now expressed fear, retained, if we may so say, behind that momentary expression, its habitual character of subtlety and cunning.

When he reached the spot where the punishment was to take place, the culprit stopped, looked toward the same window that had previously engaged the attention of the aide-de-camp, and was still hermetically closed; then he cast his eyes over the crowd at the gate leading into the street, and finally let them rest, with a pitiful shudder, upon the plank whereon he was to be laid. The shudder did not escape the notice of his friend Ivan, who, as he approached him to remove the striped shirt he wore, seized the opportunity to say in his ear:

"Come, Gregory, courage!"

"You know what you promised me," replied the victim with an indefinable expression of entreaty.

"Not for the first blows, Gregory, don't expect that. During the first blows the aide-de-camp will be looking; but when we come to the latter end of them have no fear; we will find a way to ease up a little."

"Be sure and look out for the end of the lash."

"I'll do my best, Gregory, I'll do my best; don't you know me yet?"

"Alas! yes," was Gregory's reply.

"Well?" queried the aide-de-camp.

"Here, your Nobility," said Ivan, "we are all ready."

"Wait, wait, nobly born," cried poor Gregory, giving the young captain, to flatter him, the title *vache vousso korodiê*, bestowed distinctively upon colonels; "I believe that Mademoiselle Vaninka's window is opening."

The young captain hastily raised his eyes to the spot which had already several times engaged his attention; but not a fold of the silk curtains, which could be seen inside the glass, had so much as stirred.

"You lie, villain," said the aide-de-camp, slowly removing his eyes from the window, as if he too longed to see it open, "you lie; and, moreover, what has your noble mistress to do with this matter?"

"Forgive me, your Excellency," said Gregory, gratifying the aide-de-camp with a new rank; "but, as it is on her account that I am going to receive, it may be that she would have pity on a poor servant, and ——."

"And so," the captain began in a strange tone, as if he himself were of the culprit's opinion, and regretted that Vaninka had not pardoned him; "but enough, let us make haste."

"At once, your Nobility, at once," said Ivan.

"Come, comrade," he continued, addressing Gregory, "now's the time."

Gregory heaved a deep sigh, cast a last glance at the window, and seeing that there was no change in that direction, made up his mind at last to take his place upon the fatal plank; at the same moment two other serfs, whom Ivan had selected for assistants, took his hands, put his arms out at full length, and tied his wrists to posts set that distance apart, so that he was in almost the same position as if he were crucified. His neck was then placed in a necklet, and as everything was ready, and no sign favorable to the culprit was made from the still tightly closed window, the young aide-de-camp waved his hand and said: "to work."

"Patience, your Nobility, patience," said Ivan, delaying the execution as long as possible in the hope that some sign would come from the inexorable window; "there was a knot in my knout, and if I left it there Gregory would have the right to complain."

The instrument in question, the form of which is perhaps unknown to our readers, is a sort of whip, with a handle some two feet long. To this handle is attached a flat leather thong, of the width of two fingers, and four feet long, ending in a ring of copper or iron; to this ring is attached another thong, two feet long and an inch and a half wide at the beginning, but narrowing down to a point. This last thong is dipped in milk, and then left to dry in the sun, the result being that its point becomes as sharp and cutting as a knife-blade. In addition the thong is frequently changed, generally after every six blows, because the flow of blood softens it.

However great Ivan's reluctance to untie the knot, or however bunglingly he went about it, he had no choice

but to get it done at last; for the spectators began to grumble, and their grumbling aroused the young aide-de-camp from the fit of abstraction into which he had fallen. He raised his head which had fallen forward on his chest, glanced for the last time at the window, and discerning no indication of mercy in that direction, turned to the coachman, and with a more imperious wave of the hand, and a voice whose accent forbade any farther delay, ordered him to proceed with his task.

Ivan had no alternative but to obey, and he did not even try to find a new pretext. He stepped back two steps to take his spring, then sprang forward, raising himself on tiptoe and waving the knout above his head, and suddenly brought it down upon Gregory with such dexterity that the thong wound itself thrice around his body, enveloping him like a serpent, and the end struck the under side of the plank on which he lay. But, in spite of Ivan's success in that regard, Gregory shrieked with pain. Ivan counted one.

At the shriek the young aide-de-camp turned again toward the window; but it remained tightly closed, and he mechanically brought his eyes back to the victim, repeating the word—one.

The knout had left three bluish furrows on Gregory's shoulders.

Ivan stepped back as before, and with the same skill wrapped his whistling thong around the patient's back again, taking care that the end did not touch him. Gregory shrieked again, and Ivan counted two.

This time the blood began to come to the surface.

At the third stroke a few drops of blood appeared outside the skin.

At the fourth the blood spurted out.

At the fifth it spattered in the young officer's face;

he drew back and wiped his face with his handkerchief. Ivan seized the opportunity, while his attention was diverted to count seven instead of six. The captain said nothing.

At the ninth blow Ivan paused to change his thong, and hoping that a second fraud would succeed as well as the first, counted eleven instead of ten. At that moment a window opposite Vaninka's was thrown open, and a man of some forty-five years wearing a general's uniform made his appearance. In the same tone in which he would have said : "courage, my men ; at them on the double-quick!" he said ; "good ; enough!" and closed the window again.

This apparition brought the young officer's face around toward his general, and he stood motionless with his left hand glued to the seam of his trousers and his right hand at his hat, during the few moments that it lasted. As soon as the window was closed he repeated the general's words, and the knout fell without touching the culprit.

"Thank his Excellency, Gregory," said Ivan, winding the thong of the knout around the handle, "for he let you off from two blows; and those," he added, stooping to untie his hands, "with the two I stole, cut down the number to eight instead of a dozen. Come you fellows, untie his other hand."

But poor Gregory was in no condition to thank any one ; he was almost fainting with pain, and could hardly stand up. Two *moujiks* took him by the arms and led him back, followed by Ivan, to the slaves' quarters. When they reached the door, he stopped and looked back, and saw Ivan following him with his eyes with an expression of sympathy.

"Monsieur Fœdor," he cried, "thank his noble

Excellency, the general, for me. As to Vaninka," he added, in an undertone, "I will undertake to thank her myself."

"What are you grumbling there between your teeth?" cried the aide-de-camp, angrily; for he thought that he detected a threatening tone in Gregory's voice.

"Nothing, your Nobility, nothing," said Ivan, "the poor fellow thanks you for the trouble you have taken to be present at his punishment, and says that it's a great honor for him, that's all."

"Very good, very good," rejoined the young man, suspecting that Ivan had made some change in the original text, but evidently not anxious to know anything more; "and if Gregory doesn't wish to put me to that trouble again, let him drink a little less brandy, or at least, when he is drunk, remember to be a little more respectful."

Ivan made a gesture of humble submission, and followed his comrades. Fœdor re-entered the house, and the crowd dispersed, ill-content with Ivan's bad faith, and the general's generosity, which had together cheated them out of four blows of the knout, that is to say, one-third of the performance.

Now that we have made our readers acquainted with some of the characters of this narrative, we beg leave to put them in more direct communication with those who have thus far appeared only for a moment, or have remained hidden behind the curtain.

General Count Tchermayloff had been, as we said in the beginning, governor of one of the most important cities in the neighborhood of Pultava, and had been recalled to St. Petersburg by the Emperor Paul I., who honored him with marked friendship. He was a widower with one daughter, who had inherited the fortune

and beauty and pride of her mother, who claimed to be a direct descendant of one of the leaders of that Tartar race which invaded Russia under Genghiz Khan in the thirteenth century. By an unlucky chance the young Vaninka's natural inclination to haughtiness was vastly increased by the education she received. Having lost his wife, and being unable to give his personal attention to his daughter, General Tchermayloff had chosen for her an English governess, who, instead of frowning upon her pupil's disdainful impulses, brought them to a still higher stage of development by bringing to the support of her naturally aristocratic feelings the theories which make the English nobility the haughtiest nobility on the face of the earth. Thus it was that among the different branches in which Vaninka received instruction, there was one to which she gave special attention, and that was the science of her position, if we may so term it. She was perfectly familiar with the degree of nobility and power of all the noble families—those which took precedence of hers, and those which had to yield the *pas* to hers; she could, without ever making a mistake, a very difficult thing in Russia, call every one by the title to which his rank entitled him. Thus she came to have the utmost contempt for everybody who walked on a lower plane. As to the serfs and slaves, the reader will understand that for one with Vaninka's characteristics, they had no existence; they were bearded animals far below her dog or her horse, so far as regarded any feeling they inspired in her; and certainly she would not have hesitated an instant to sacrifice the life of a *moujik* for either of those interesting animals. Like all the distinguished women of her nation, she was a passably good musician, and could speak French, Italian, German and English with equal facility.

The development of her features was in harmony with that of her character. The result was that Vaninka was beautiful, but that her beauty was a little forbidding perhaps. In truth, her great black eyes, her straight nose, her lips curled up at the corners in sympathy with the disdainful expression of her face, caused at the first glance, a strange feeling on the part of those who approached her—a feeling which was permanent except in the case of her equals or her superiors, with whom she became a woman like other women, while to those beneath her she remained as proud and unapproachable as a goddess.

At seventeen Vaninka's education was completed, and her governess, whose health was already impaired by the harsh climate of St. Petersburg, asked to be relieved. Her request was granted with the ostentatious gratitude of which the Russian noblemen are to-day the last exponents in Europe, and Vaninka was left alone, with no guide save the blind love of her father, whose only child she was, and who, in his rough, uncivilized admiration for her, looked upon her as the embodiment of all human perfection.

Matters were at this stage in the general's family when he received a letter from one of the friends of his boyhood, written on his death-bed. Count Romayoff had been banished to his estates as the result of some difficulty with Potemkin ; his career was thereby cut short, and having failed to recover his vanished influence, he was dying of grief four hundred leagues from St. Petersburg, less perhaps on account of his banishment and his own misfortunes, than because those misfortunes had cast a blight upon the fortunes and the future of his only son, Fœdor. The count, realizing that he was about to leave him alone, and without resource to battle

with the world, commended him to the general, in the name of their former friendship, desiring him to employ the influence he possessed with Paul I. to obtain a lieutenancy for him. The general immediately wrote in reply that his son should find in him a second father; but when this comforting message arrived, Romayoff was no more, and Fœdor himself received the letter, and returned it to the writer when he presented himself to make known the loss he had sustained, and claim the promised protection. But, diligent as he was the general had already taken his measures, and Paul I. at his solicitation had given the young man a sub-lieutenancy in the Semonowski regiment; so that Fœdor entered upon his duties on the day following his arrival.

Although the youth did scarcely more than pass through the general's house on his way to the barracks in the Litenoi quarter, he remained there long enough to see Vaninka, and to carry away her image in his heart. It must be remembered that Fœdor arrived at the capital with a heart bursting with natural, generous passion; his gratitude to his patron, who opened a career before him, was intense, and everybody belonging to him seemed to have a claim upon his gratitude; so that he may have somewhat exaggerated the beauty of the girl who was introduced to him as his sister, but who, regardless of that relationship, received him with the frigid haughtiness of a queen. However, the apparition, ice-cold as it was, left its mark none the less in the young man's heart, as we have said, and his arrival at St. Petersburg was made memorable by his first experience of an entirely unfamiliar sensation.

Vaninka, for her part, hardly noticed Fœdor; indeed, what was a penniless young sub-lieutenant, with no future, to her? Her dreams were of a princely alliance

which would make her one of the most powerful women in all Russia; and unless some miracle, like those of the Thousand and One Nights, should be performed in his behalf, Fœdor could promise her nothing of that kind.

Some days after this first interview, Fœdor returned to take leave of the general; his regiment formed part of the contingent that Marshal Suwarroff was taking with him into Italy, and Fœdor proposed to lay down his life there or to return worthy of the noble patron who had become answerable for him.

On this occasion, whether because the magnificent uniform he wore enhanced Fœdor's natural beauty, or because at the moment of departure and in the exaltation of hope his enthusiasm had crowned the young man with a poetic halo, Vaninka, marveling at the wondrous change that had taken place in him, deigned to give her hand to him at her father's suggestion. This was far more than Fœdor had dared to hope; and so he at once put his knee to the floor, as he might have done before a queen, and taking Vaninka's hand between his own trembling ones ventured just to touch it with his lips. But, light as the kiss was, Vaninka shuddered as if a red hot iron had touched her, for she felt a thrill run through all her veins, and a burning blush rise to her cheeks. She withdrew her hand so quickly that Fœdor feared that his manner of leave-taking, respectful as it was, had offended her; so he remained on his knees, clasped his hands and gazed up at her so pitifully, that she forgot her pride and consoled him with a smile. Thereupon Fœdor rose, his heart overflowing with indescribable joy, but quite unable to say what was its source. But of this he was perfectly sure, that, although he was on the point of leaving Vaninka, he had never been so happy as at that moment.

The young officer left St. Petersburg dreaming golden dreams; for his prospects were most enviable, whether they were gloomy or brilliant. If the campaign should end for him in a bloody grave, he believed that he had seen in Vaninka's eyes that she would regret him; if it provided opportunities for him to win glory, glory would bear him back in triumph to St. Petersburg, and glory is a queen who performs miracles for her favorites.

The army of which Fœdor's regiment formed a part passed through Germany, passed over into Italy by the Tyrolese Alps, and entered Verona April 14, 1799. Suwarroff at once effected a junction with General Melas, and took command of both armies.

The following day General Chastelar proposed to him to make a reconnoissance; but Suwarroff, gazing at him in amazement, replied: "I know no other way of reconnoitring the enemy than to march against him, and fight him."

It was a fact that this expeditious policy had become Suwarroff's rule of action. Thus he had vanquished the Turks at Fokschany and Ismael; thus he conquered Poland after a campaign of a few days only, and took Praga in less than four hours. Catherine in her gratitude for these achievements sent the victorious general a wreath of oak-leaves interwoven with precious stones worth six hundred thousand roubles, together with a marshal's baton of solid gold studded with diamonds, and accompanied his promotion to the rank of marshal with the privilege of selecting a regiment which should bear his name forever. On his return she gave him leave to enjoy a well-earned respite from his labors on a superb estate with which she had presented him, as well as the eight thousand serfs who dwelt upon it. What a grand example for Fœdor! Suwarroff, the son of a

simple Russian officer, received his education at the school of Cadets, and made his first campaign as a sub-lieutenant, like himself; why might there not be two Suwarroffs in the same century?

Suwarroff therefore arrived in Italy, whither his fame had preceded him, devout, fiery, indefatigable, impassible, living the simple life of a Tartar, fighting with the ardor of a Cossack; he was the very man needed to continue the victories of General Melas over the soldiers of the Republic, discouraged by Scherer's disastrous indecision. Moreover the Austro-Russian army, which amounted to a hundred thousand men, was confronted by only twenty-nine to thirty thousand French.

Suwarroff began, as he usually did, with a thunder-clap. On April 20, he appeared before Brescia, which made a fruitless attempt at resistance. After a cannonade lasting scarcely half an hour, the Peschiera gate was beaten down with axes, and the Korsakoff division, of which Fœdor's regiment formed the vanguard, entered the town on the run, driving before them the garrison of two thousand men only, who sought shelter in the citadel. Being pressed with an impetuosity which the French were not accustomed to expect from their enemies, Boucret, who was in command, seeing the scaling ladders already attached to the walls, offered to capitulate; but his position was so precarious that he could obtain no better conditions for himself and his troops from his savage foes than to become prisoners of war.

Suwarroff was the man of all others who best knew how to take advantage of a victory. He was no sooner master of Brescia, his lightning-like occupation of which greatly increased the discouragement of our army, than he ordered General Kray to press the siege of Peschiera with vigor. Kray thereupon fixed his headquarters at

Valeggio, equally distant from Peschiera and Mantua, and stretched his lines along the Mincio from the Po to the Lake of Garda, thus investing both towns at once. Meanwhile the commander-in-chief, pressing forward with the bulk of his army, crossed the Oglio in two columns, deployed one of them under General Rosenberg in the direction of Bergamo, and sent the other, under General Melas, forward as far as the Serio, while two bodies of seven or eight thousand men, commanded by Generals Kaim and Hohenzollern, were dispatched toward Plaisance and Cremona along the left bank of the Po. Thus the Austro-Russian army advanced eighty thousand strong, with a front of eighteen leagues.

At sight of the advancing forces, which were three times more numerous than his own, Scherer, retreating all along the line, destroyed his bridges over the Adda, hopeless of his ability to defend them, and transferred his headquarters to Milan, awaiting in that city a reply to a letter he had sent the Directory, wherein he tacitly admitted his incapacity by tendering his resignation. But as his successor's arrival was delayed, and Suwarroff was coming nearer and nearer, Scherer became more and more terrified by the responsibility that was crushing him, and turned over the command to one of his most able lieutenants. The general selected by Scherer was Moreau, who was once more to fight against these same Russians, in whose ranks he was destined to die.

This unexpected appointment was proclaimed amid shouts of joy from the troops. Moreau, whose magnificent campaign on the Rhine had won for him the name of the French Fabius, rode along the lines, greeted by the enthusiastic acclamation of the different divisions, who shouted: "Vive Moreau! Long live the savior of the army of Italy!"

But their enthusiasm, boundless though it was, did not blind Moreau to the terrible position in which he was placed; to avoid the danger of being outflanked at the ends of his line, he was forced to present a front parallel to that of the Russian army along its whole length; that is to say, to stretch out his forces from the Lake of Lecco to Pizzighitone, a distance of twenty leagues. It is true that it was open to him to fall back toward Piedmont, concentrate his troops at Alessandria, and there await the reinforcements promised by the Directory; but by so doing he would compromise the safety of the army of Naples, by leaving it isolated. He resolved therefore to defend the passage of the Adda as long as possible, in order to give the division of Dessolles, which Massena had sent him, time to come up, and protect his left, while Gauthier's division, which had received orders to evacuate Tuscany, was hurrying up by forced marches to join his right.

He took up his own position with the centre, to defend the fortified bridge of Cassano, the head of which was protected by the Ritorto canal, where outposts, with a considerable force of artillery, were intrenched.

Being always as prudent as he was brave, Moreau took measures to assure his retreat toward the Apennines and Genoa, in case of a reverse.

His dispositions were scarcely made when the tireless Suwarroff entered Triveglio; simultaneously with the news of the Russian general's arrival in that town, Moreau learned of the surrender of Bergamo and its castle, and on April 25 he saw the vanguard of the allied army.

On the same day the Russian general divided his army into three strong columns, corresponding to the three principal points of the French line, but each more than

twice as strong in point of numbers as the force it was to fight. The column on the right, commanded by General Wukassowich, advanced toward the lower end of the Lake of Lecco, where General Serrurier awaited it; that on the left, under Melas, took up a position opposite the intrenchments of Cassano; lastly, the Austrian divisions of Zoph and Ott, which formed the centre, were concentrated at Cannonia, to be at hand when the moment arrived to seize Vaprio. The Austrian and Russian troops lay in camp within cannon-shot of the French outposts.

That evening Fœdor, whose regiment formed part of Chastelar's division, wrote to General Tchermayloff:

"At last we are face to face with the French; a great battle is sure to take place to-morrow morning; to-morrow evening I shall be a lieutenant, or dead."

On the morrow, which was April 26, the cannon began to roar at daybreak at the ends of the line; on our extreme left the grenadiers of Prince Bagratheon led the attack; and on our extreme right General Seckendorff, who was marching upon Crema, from the camp at Triveglio.

The two attacks met with very different success; Bagratheon's grenadiers were driven back with terrible loss, while Seckendorff on the other hand drove the French out of Crema, and carried his reconnoissances as far as the bridge of Lodi.

Fœdor's previsions were not fulfilled; his regiment, with the whole army corps to which it belonged, lay still throughout the day, awaiting orders which did not come.

Suwarroff's dispositions were not entirely made; he needed the night to complete them.

During the night, Moreau, having learned of the advantage Seckendorff had gained over his extreme right, sent orders to Serrurier to leave at Lecco, which was a

position easy to defend, only the eighteenth light demi-brigade and a detachment of dragoons, and to fall back upon the centre with the rest of his force. Serrurier received the order about two in the morning and executed it at once.

On their side the Russians had not wasted their time; turning the darkness of the night to good advantage, General Wukassowich rebuilt the bridge destroyed by the French at Brivio, while General Chastelar was constructing a new one two miles below the castle of Trezzo. Of these two bridges, the one was repaired and the other built without the least suspicion of any such operations on the part of the French outposts. Surprised at four o'clock in the morning by two Austrian divisions which had reached the right bank of the Adda, under cover of the village of San Gervasio, without being seen, the troops entrusted with the defence of the castle of Trezzo abandoned it and fled. The Austrians pursued them as far as Pozzo, where the French halted and turned upon their pursuers. General Serrurier with the troops he was bringing up from Lecco was at Pozzo, and when he heard the cannonade in his rear, he halted and, in obedience to the first law of war, marched toward the noise and the smoke. It was he therefore who rallied the garrison of Trezzo, and assumed the offensive, sending one of his aides-de-camp to Moreau to advise of the manœuvre he had thought it his duty to undertake.

The French and Austrian troops thereupon fell to with incredible ferocity; the fact is that Bonaparte's old soldiers had acquired, in their early campaigns, in Italy, a habit which they could not shake off of fighting the subjects of his Imperial Majesty whenever and wherever they fell in with them. However, the numerical superiority of the Austrians was so great that our

troops were beginning to give way, when loud cheering among the rear-guard made known the arrival of reinforcements. It was General Grenier, sent by Moreau, who came up with his division at the moment when his presence was most necessary.

A part of the fresh troops reinforced the columns, swelling the masses of the centre, while another part marched around on the left to outflank the opposing force; then the drums beat all along the line, and our grenadiers began to win back once more the battlefield which had already been twice taken and retaken. But at that moment the Austrians too were reinforced by the Marquis of Chastelar with his division; again the advantage of numbers was with the enemy. Grenier at once called in his wing to strengthen the centre, and Serrurier, forming his troops in echelon fell back upon Pozzo, where he awaited the enemy.

At that point the main battle was fought; three times the village of Pozzo was taken and retaken, until at last being attacked for the fourth time by a force double their own the French were compelled to evacuate it. In this last attack an Austrian colonel was mortally wounded, but, on the other hand, General Beker, who commanded the French rear, and refused to retreat, was surrounded with a few of his men, and after seeing them fall at his side one after another was compelled to surrender his sword to a young Russian officer of the Semonowski regiment, who turned his prisoner over to the soldiers who followed, and hurried back to the combat.

The two French generals had agreed upon the village of Vaprio as a rallying point; but in the moments of confusion caused among our troops by the evacuation of Pozzo, the Austrian cavalry had charged so far that Serrurier was separated from his colleague, and compelled

to fall back upon Verderio with twenty-five hundred men, while Grenier alone reached the rendezvous, and halted at Vaprio, where he once more showed his face to the foe.

Meanwhile a terrible struggle was taking place at the centre. Melas with eighteen to twenty thousand men had attacked the fortified posts at the head of the bridge of Cassano and at the Ritorto canal. At seven o'clock in the morning, just as Moreau had sent away Grenier's division, Melas in person fell upon the outposts at the head of three battalions of Austrian grenadiers. There for two hours, the carnage was appalling; thrice driven back, leaving more than fifteen hundred men at the foot of the ramparts, the Austrians returned thrice to the charge, reinforced each time by fresh troops, and always led on and encouraged by Melas, who had his former defeats to avenge. At last the French attacked for the fourth time, and forced into their retrenchments, fell back, disputing every foot of ground, to the second line, which defended the head of the bridge, and where Moreau commanded in person. At that point, for another two hours, a desperate hand to hand combat was waged, while the artillery kept up a fearful fire, almost muzzle to muzzle. At last the Austrians, rallying for a last charge, rushed forward with drawn bayonets, and in default of ladders or a practicable breach heaped the bodies of their slain comrades against the ramparts, and so succeeded in scaling them.

There was not a moment to lose. Moreau ordered a retreat, and while the French were falling back across the Adda, he personally covered their passage with a single battalion of grenadiers, of whom only a hundred and twenty remained after half an hour, while three of his aides-de-camp were shot down at his sides. But the

retreat was effected in good order, and he at last withdrew, always facing the enemy, who rushed upon the bridge as he reached the other bank. The Austrians darted across the bridge in pursuit of him; but suddenly a terrible uproar arose, drowning the roar of the artillery; the second arch of the bridge had blown up, and with it all those who were crowded into the narrow space; both sides recoiled, and in the interval between them, fragments of men and huge stones poured down like rain.

But at the moment that Moreau succeeded in placing a momentary barrier between himself and Melas, General Grenier's division came up in disorder, having been forced to evacuate Vaprio. The Austro-Russian army of Zoph, Ott and Chastelar was hotly pursuing them. Moreau ordered a change of front, and faced about towards this latest enemy, who came upon his hands just when he least expected it; he succeeded in rallying Grenier's troops and drawing them up in battle-order. But while his back was turned Melas was restoring the bridge, and, in his turn, crossing the river. Moreau thus found himself threatened in front and on both sides by forces thrice as numerous as his own. All the officers who stood around him besought him to consider the advisability of retreating; for upon the safety of his person depended the preservation of Italy for France. Moreau resisted for a long while, for he realized the terrible consequence of the battle he had lost, and which he did not wish to survive, although for him to have won it was an utter impossibility; but a picked body of men surrounded him, and forming a hollow square, fell back with him in their midst, while the rest of the army sacrificed themselves to cover the retreat of the one man in whose genius, they believed, lay their last hope.

The battle lasted three hours longer, during which the

rear-guard of the army performed prodigies of valor. At last Melas, seeing that his enemy had escaped him, and feeling that his troops were in need of repose after such a stubbornly contested fight, ordered a cessation of firing, and went into camp on the right bank of the Adda, in the villages of Imago, Gorgonzola and Cassano, remaining master of the battlefield, upon which we left twenty-five hundred dead, a hundred pieces of cannon, and twenty howitzers.

In the evening Suwarroff invited General Beker to take supper with him, and asked him who it was who made him prisoner. Beker informed him that it was a young officer of the first regiment that entered Pozzo; Suwarroff inquired what regiment that was, and was told that it was the Semonowski regiment. The commander-in-chief then ordered inquiries to be made in order to ascertain the young man's name. At that moment sub-lieutenant Fœdor Romayloff was announced. He came to bring Suwarroff General Beker's sword. Suwarroff requested him to remain and sup with his prisoner and himself.

The next day Fœdor wrote to his patron:

"I have kept my word; I am a lieutenant and Marshal Suwarroff has asked his Majesty Paul I. for the order of St. Vladimir for me."

On April 28 Suwarroff entered Milan, which place Moreau had abandoned to retire behind the Tessino, and he caused the following proclamation, which admirably portrays the character of the Muscovite hero, to be placarded throughout the city:

"The victorious army of the apostolic Roman Emperor is among you; it combats for naught but the rehabilitation of the holy religion, and of the nobility, the clergy, and the former government of Italy.

"Join us, O people, in our struggle for God and the

faith; for we have come with our armies to Milan and to Plaisance to assist you."

The dearly bought victories of Trebbia and Novi followed that of Cassano, and left Suwarroff so weakened that he could not avail himself of his opportunities. Furthermore, just as the Russian commander was about to march, a new plan of campaign arrived from the Aulic Council at Vienna. The allied powers had determined upon the invasion of France, and assigned to each general the part he was to play in carrying out their latest plan. Suwarroff was ordered to make his way into France through Switzerland, and the Archduke to turn over to him the posts that he occupied, and fall back upon the Lower Rhine.

The troops with whom Suwarroff, leaving the Austrians confronting Moreau and Macdonald, was thenceforth to operate against Masséna, consisted of thirty thousand Russians whom he had with him under arms; thirty thousand others from the reserve army commanded by Count Tolstoy in Galicia, and to be led into Switzerland by General Korsakoff; twenty-five to thirty thousand Austrians commanded by General Hotze, and lastly, five or six thousand French *émigrés* under the Prince de Condé; in all, some ninety to ninety-five thousand men.

Fœdor was wounded at Novi; but Suwarroff had covered his wound with a second decoration, and a captain's commission hastened his convalescence; so that the young officer, even more happy than proud with the new rank he had won for himself, was in condition to go with the army when, on September 18, it began its march toward Salvedra, and entered the valley of the Tessino.

Everything had prospered hitherto, and so long as he remained in the fertile pleasant plains of Italy Suwarroff had no occasion to do aught but praise the courage and

devotion of his troops; but when in lieu of the rich plains of Lombardy, watered by placid rivers with melodious names, they saw the rough roads of the Levantino, and towering far above them, crowned with eternal snow, the cloud-touching peaks of the St. Gothard, their enthusiasm died away, their energy disappeared, and gloomy forebodings filled the hearts of these wild children of the North. Unexpected murmurs ran along the lines, and suddenly the vanguard halted, insisting that they would go no farther. In vain did Fœdor beg and implore his company to leave their comrades and set them an example by marching on ahead; his soldiers threw down their weapons and lay down themselves beside them. Just as they gave this proof of insubordination, renewed murmurs arose at the rear of the army, and grew rapidly louder like the roar of an approaching tempest. Suwarroff came riding up from the rear-guard, attended by that appalling proof of mutiny and insubordination, which his passage aroused as he rode along the line. By the time he reached the head of the column the murmurs had become imprecations.

Thereupon Suwarroff appealed to his soldiers with the uncultured eloquence to which he owed the miracles he had performed with them. But his voice was drowned by cries of "Retreat! retreat!" He then took the most refractory and ordered them whipped until the degrading punishment should shame them into obedience.

But the blows had no more effect than the exhortations, and the shouts did not cease. Suwarroff saw that all was lost, unless he resorted to some powerful and unforeseen expedient to overcome the mutinous spirits.

He rode up to Fœdor.

"Captain," he said, "leave these villains; take eight non-commissioned officers and dig a grave."

Fœdor gazed at his general in amazement, as if to ask him for an explanation of this strange order.

"Do as I bid you," said Suwarroff.

Fœdor obeyed, and the eight officers set about the task. In ten minutes the grave was dug, to the vast astonishment of the whole army, who stood around in a half-circle, on the slopes of the two hills which bordered the road, as upon the benches of a vast amphitheatre.

Suwarroff thereupon alighted from his horse, broke his sword and threw it into the grave, removed his epaulets and threw them after the sword, took off the decorations which covered his breast, and threw them after the sword and epaulets; then stripping himself naked, he went down into the grave himself, and cried in a loud voice:

"Cover me with earth, leave your general here! You are no longer my children. I am no longer your father; there is nothing left for me but to die."

At these strange words, which were uttered in a voice of such power that it was heard by the whole army, the Russian grenadiers threw themselves weeping into the grave, and raised the general in their arms, craving his forgiveness, and begging him to lead them against the enemy.

"Good!" cried Suwarroff. "Now I recognize my children. To the enemy! to the enemy!"

Roars, rather than shouts, greeted his words. Suwarroff dressed himself again, and while he was dressing himself, the ring-leaders crawled in the dust to his feet and kissed them. Then, when his epaulets were once more fastened to his shoulders, when his crosses were once more glistening on his breast, he mounted his horse, and rode on, followed by the army, all the soldiers having sworn with one voice to die to the last man rather than abandon their father.

The same day Suwarroff attacked Airolo; but the evil days had begun to dawn; the victor of Cassano, the Trebbia and Novi had left fortune exhausted in the Italian plains. For twelve hours six hundred Frenchmen held three thousand Russian grenadiers under the walls of the town, and darkness came before Suwarroff had succeeded in dislodging them. The next day he set all his troops in motion to surround that handful of heroes; but the sky grew dark, and soon the wind drove a cold rain in the Russians' faces. The French seized the opportunity to retreat, evacuated the valley of Unseren, crossed the Reuss, and drew up in battle order on the heights of the Furka and the Grimsel. But a part of the Russian general's object was attained; the St. Gothard was his. To be sure, as soon as he left it behind, the French would reoccupy it, and cut off his retreat; but what cared Suwarroff for that? Was he not accustomed always to march forward?

And so he marched on without disturbing himself as to what he left behind him, reached Andermalt, and found Lecourbe with fifteen hundred men guarding the defiles of the Devil's Bridge.

There the struggle was renewed; for three days fifteen hundred Frenchmen held thirty thousand Russians in check. Suwarroff roared like a lion caught in the toils; for he was at a loss to understand the tricks of fortune. At last, on the fourth day, he learned that Korsakoff, who had preceded him, and with whom he expected to effect a junction, had been beaten by Molitor, and that Masséna had retaken Zurich and occupied the Canton of Glarus. He at once abandoned the idea of following the valley of the Reuss, and wrote to Korsakoff and Jellachich: "I am hurrying forward to repair your mistakes; stand firm as walls; you shall

answer to me with your heads for the first backward step." The aide-de-camp was also instructed to communicate verbally to the Russian and Austrian generals a new plan of operations; Generals Linken and Jellachich were ordered to attack the French separately and afterward effect a junction of their forces in Glarus, whither Suwarroff would himself descend by way of the Klonthal, thus enclosing Molitor between two walls of iron.

Suwarroff was so confident of the success of this plan that when he reached the shore of the Lake of Klonthal he sent a flag of truce to Molitor, to call upon him to surrender, in view of the fact that he was, so he said, completely surrounded. Molitor thereupon sent word to him that the appointment he had made with his generals could not be kept by them, as he had beaten them one after the other, and driven them back into the Grisons; but that, on the contrary, he, Suwarroff, was caught between two fires, as Masséna was advancing by way of Mutten. Molitor therefore demanded that he lay down his arms.

When this strange response was reported to him, Suwarroff thought that he must be dreaming; but he soon recovered his self-possession, and realizing the risk he ran by remaining in the defile where he then was, he made a precipitate onslaught upon Molitor. That officer received him at the point of the bayonet, and blocked his exit from the defile, with twelve hundred men holding fifteen to eighteen thousand Russians in check for eight hours. At nightfall Molitor evacuated the Klonthal, and fell back upon Linth to protect the bridges of Näfels and Mollis. The old marshal thereupon descended like a torrent upon Glarus and Mitlodi, where he learned that Molitor had told him no

more than the truth; that Jellachich and Linken were beaten and separated; that Masséna was advancing upon Schwytz, and that General Rosenberg, to whom he had entrusted the defence of the bridge of Mutten had been forced to fall back; so that he was actually in danger of finding himself in the position in which he expected to place Molitor.

There was no time to be lost if he wished to retreat. Suwarroff plunged into the passes of Schwanden, Engi and Elm in such hot haste that he left his wounded and part of his artillery behind. The French at once set off in pursuit, overtaking him sometimes on steep precipices and sometimes in the clouds. Whole armies defiled in places where the chamois hunters removed their shoes, and walked with bare feet, clinging with their hands to the rocks to save themselves from falling. Three nations from three distant countries seemed to have made an appointment to meet above the dwelling-place of the eagle, as if to make God the judge at close quarters of the justice of their cause. There were times when those ice-crowned summits became raging volcanoes; when the torrents rushed down into the valleys, blood red; and when avalanches of human bodies swept down into the abysses. Death reaped such a harvest, where life had never before been seen, that the very vultures, made disdainful by the abundance of carrion, did not remove their eyes from the corpses, so says the tradition of the peasantry, except to look at their young.

At last Suwarroff succeeded in rallying his troops in the neighborhood of Lindau, and recalled Korsakoff, who still occupied Bregenz. But his whole force amounted to only thirty thousand men, all that remained of the eighty thousand whom Paul I. had

furnished to the coalition as his contingent. Within a fortnight three divisions, each of them more numerous than Masséna's whole army, had been defeated by that army.

Suwarroff, in a rage at having been beaten by the same republicans whose extermination he had announced prematurely, blamed the Austrians for his defeat, and declared that he would undertake nothing more for the coalition, until he was in receipt of further orders from the emperor, to whom he had communicated the treachery of his allies.

Paul's reply to his communication was a command to start his troops back to Russia, and to return himself as quickly as possible to St. Petersburg, where a triumphal entry awaited him; the same ukase provided that Suwarroff should be provided with apartments in the imperial palace for the rest of his days, and that a monument should be erected in one of the public squares of St. Petersburg in commemoration of his services.

Thus Fœdor was to see Vaninka once more. Wherever there was dangerous duty to be done, in the plains of Italy, in the gorges of the Tessino, or on the snows of Mount Pragel, he was always among the first to volunteer, and his name invariably appeared among those mentioned as worthy of recompense; and Suwarroff was too gallant a soldier himself to be lavish with such honors when they were not deserved. He returned, therefore, as he had promised, having shown himself worthy of his noble patron's interest, and perhaps, who knows? of Vaninka's love as well. Moreover the marshal had conceived a strong liking for him, and no one could say whither Suwarroff's friendship might carry him, for Paul I. honored the old marshal as the warriors of old were honored.

But it was impossible to depend upon Paul I., whose nature was a combination of violent impulses. So it was that, on arriving at Riga, Suwarroff, who had done nothing whatever to merit his master's displeasure, and had no idea whence the blow came, received a letter from the privy councillor, who informed him, in the emperor's name, that as he had tolerated a breach of discipline among his soldiers, the emperor deprived him of all the honors he had earned, and forbade him to appear before him.

It was a crushing blow to the old war-horse, already soured by the reverses he had experienced, which, like an evening storm, dimmed the beauty of a glorious day. He assembled all his officers on the square at Riga, and took leave of them, with tears in his eyes, like a father about to leave his family. Then, having embraced the generals and colonels, and pressed the hand of each of the others, he said farewell to them once more, leaving them to go on without him to their destination, threw himself into a sledge, traveled night and day, and entered *in cognito* that capital which he had anticipated entering in triumph. There he was driven to an outlying quarter, to the house of one of his nieces, where he died a fortnight later of a broken heart.

Fœdor made almost as rapid a journey as his commander, and like him reached St. Petersburg unheralded by any letter announcing his arrival. As he had no relative in the capital, and also as his entire life centred in a single individual, he was driven straight to the Neosky Prospect, where the general's house was situated on the bank of the Catherine Canal. He leaped from his carriage, darted into the courtyard, cleared the steps almost at a bound, opened the door of the reception

room, and burst like a thunderbolt into the midst of the footman and inferior officers of the household, who cried out in surprise when they saw him. He asked where the general was, and they replied by pointing to the door of the dining-room; he was breakfasting there with his daughter.

Thereupon Fœdor experienced a strange reaction; he felt that his legs would fail him, and leaned against the wall to keep from falling; at the moment when he was to see Vaninka again, that soul of his soul for whom alone he had braved so many dangers, he shuddered to think that he might not find her as she was when he left her.

But at that moment the door of the dining-room opened, and Vaninka appeared. As her eyes fell upon the young man, she uttered a cry and turned toward the general.

"Here is Fœdor, father," she said; with that fleeting inflection which leaves no doubt in the mind of him who hears it as to the sentiment that inspired it.

"Fœdor!" cried the general, rushing forward and holding out his arms. Fœdor was expected at Vaninka's feet and on her father's heart. He realized that the first moment should be given to his respect and gratitude, and threw himself into the general's arms. To do otherwise was to avow his love; and had he the right to avow his love before he knew whether it was reciprocated?

Fœdor turned again, and as he had done on taking leave, put his knee to the ground before Vaninka. But the haughty young girl needed but a single moment to dismiss to the lowest depths of her heart the emotion she had felt; the blush that passed over her forehead like a flame had disappeared, and she had become once

more the cold, proud statue of alabaster, a monument of pride, begun by nature and completed by education.

Fœdor kissed her hand; it trembled, but was as cold as ice. Fœdor felt his heart stand still and thought he was going to die.

"Well, Vaninka," said the general, "why are you so cool in your reception of a friend who has caused us so much terror and joy both? Come, Fœdor, kiss my daughter."

Fœdor rose with a suppliant expression, waiting, however, until the general's sanction should be confirmed by another's.

"Didn't you hear my father?" said Vaninka with a smile, but without enough self-control to prevent her emotion making itself manifest in her voice.

Fœdor put his lips to Vaninka's cheek, and as he held her hand at the same time, it seemed to him that it gave his a slight pressure by a nervous movement, independent of her will. A joyful cry almost escaped him, but as he looked into Vaninka's face he was startled beyond measure by her extreme pallor; her lips especially were as white as if she were dead.

The general made Fœdor take a seat at the table, Vaninka resumed hers, and as she sat with her back to the light, her father, who suspected nothing, perceived nothing.

The time they passed at the table was occupied, as may be imagined, by the guest in narrating and the hosts in listening to the story of that remarkable campaign which began under the burning sun of Italy and ended amid the snows of Switzerland. As there are no newspapers at St. Petersburg which print anything other than what the emperor permits them to print, they had heard all about Suwarroff's successes, but

knew nothing of his reverses; Fœdor described the former modestly, and the latter frankly.

We leave the reader to conjecture the general's intense interest in such a narrative as Fœdor's; his captain's epaulets, and the decorations that shone upon his breast, proved that the young man did himself less than justice in forgetting to mention his own part in the events he described; but the general, who was too generous-hearted to have any fear of sharing Suwarroff's disgrace, had already paid a visit to the dying marshal, and had learned from him how gallantly his young protégé had borne himself. When he finished his recital, it was the general's turn to enumerate all the noteworthy deeds Fœdor had found time to do in a campaign of less than a year; and when he had finished his enumeration, he added that he proposed to go to the emperor the next day, and ask his leave to take the young captain as his aide-de-camp. Fœdor, at those words, would have thrown himself at the general's feet; but he received him a second time in his arms, and to prove to him how certain he was of succeeding in his mission, he selected the apartments he was to occupy in the house.

The next day the general returned from the St. Michael Palace with the joyful news that his request was granted.

Fœdor's delight knew no bounds; from that moment he was the general's guest pending the time when he would become a member of his household. To live under the same roof with Vaninka, to see her constantly, to meet her every moment, to see her pass at the end of a corridor, to sit twice a day at table with her, all this was vastly more than Fœdor had ever hoped, and he thought at first that it would content him.

Vaninka, on her side, proud as she was, had conceived a very earnest liking for Fœdor; then he went away leaving her absolutely certain that he loved her, and during his absence her woman's pride fed upon the renown he was winning in the hope of lessening the distance which separated him from her; so that when he returned, having traversed part of that distance, she knew by the tumultuous beating of her heart that her satisfied pride had changed to a more tender feeling, and that she loved Fœdor as much as it was possible for her to love. Nevertheless she confined these sentiments, as we have seen, in their icy envelope; for Vaninka was so constituted that, although she proposed some day to tell Fœdor that she loved him, she did not propose that he should suspect it until it seemed good to her to tell him.

Matters remained in this condition for some months, and what had at first seemed to Fœdor supreme happiness, soon became insufferable torture. And, in very truth, to be in love, to feel one's heart always ready to overflow with love, to be from morning till night face to face with the beloved one, to touch her hand at table, to brush against her dress in a narrow corridor, to feel her leaning on one's arm, as one enters a drawing-room, or leaves a ball-room and to be constrained forever to control one's features so that no indication of the heart's emotion may appear,—such a struggle is beyond the power of any human will. And so Vaninka saw that Fœdor would not have the strength to keep his secret much longer, and resolved to anticipate a confession which she knew might burst from his lips at any moment.

One day when they were alone, and she remarked the young man's vain efforts to hide his feelings, she walked straight to his side, and said, looking earnestly into his eyes:

"Do you love me, Fœdor?"

"Forgive me! forgive me!" cried the young man, clasping his hands.

"Why do you ask me to forgive you, Fœdor? Is not your love pure?"

"Oh! yes! yes! indeed my love is pure; so much the purer because it is hopeless."

"And why hopeless?" queried Vaninka. "Does not my father love you like a son?"

"Oh! what are you saying? Do you, can you mean, that if your father would give me your hand, you would consent?—"

"Are you not noble-hearted, as well as noble by birth, Fœdor. You have no fortune, it is true, but I am rich enough for two."

"And then,—why,—then I am not indifferent to you?"

"I prefer you to all the men I have ever seen."

"Vaninka!"—the girl made a proud gesture—"Forgive me!" said Fœdor, "what must I do? Command me; I have no will when you are by; I fear that every feeling I have for you may offend you; guide me, and I will obey."

"What you have to do, Fœdor, is to ask my father's consent."

"And you authorize me to do that?"

"Yes; but on one condition."

"What is it? Oh! tell me! tell me!"

"That my father, whatever his reply, shall never know that I have authorized you to make the request; that no one shall know that you are following the instructions I give you; that no one shall ever know of the confession I have made to you; lastly, that you will not ask me, whatever may happen, to second you, except with my good wishes."

"Whatever you wish!" cried Fœdor. "Oh! yes, I will do whatever you wish! Have you not given me a thousand times more than I dared to hope? and if your father refuses me, do I not know that you will sympathize with my sorrow?"

"Yes, but that will not happen, I hope," said Vaninka, giving the young officer her hand which he kissed with ardor; "so then, have hope and courage!"

And Vaninka went away, leaving Fœdor a hundred times more excited and tremulous than she, woman though she was.

The same day Fœdor requested an interview with the general.

The general received his aide-de-camp, as he was accustomed to do, with an open, smiling face; but his face clouded at the first words Fœdor uttered. But when he described the true, constant, passionate love that filled his heart for his patron's daughter, when he told him that this passion was the mainspring of the glorious deeds he had so often praised, the general gave him his hand, and with emotion well-nigh as deep as his told him, that during his absence, and his ignorance of the love he carried away with him, of which he had seen no trace, he, had, at the emperor's request, given his word to the privy councillor's son. The only condition he had insisted on was that he should not be separated from his daughter until she reached the age of eighteen. Vaninka had, therefore, but five months more to remain under her father's roof.

There was nothing to be said; in Russia a wish of the emperor is a command, and from the moment it is expressed no one dreams of opposing it. But the disappointment brought such a despairing look to the young man's face, that the general, deeply touched by his silent,

resigned suffering, opened his arms. Fœdor threw himself into them, sobbing as if his heart would break.

The general then questioned him concerning his daughter; but Fœdor replied, as he had promised to do, that Vaninka was ignorant of his feeling for her, and that the step he had taken was entirely of his own motion. This assurance restored the general's tranquillity somewhat, for he feared that he had made two unhappy.

At the dinner-hour Vaninka found her father alone. Fœdor lacked the courage to be present at that meal, and to sit down with the general and his daughter so soon after his hopes had been crushed; so he took a sledge and drove to the outskirts of the city. During the whole time they were at table the general and Vaninka hardly exchanged a word; but, significant as the silence was, Vaninka governed her expression with her usual success, and the general alone seemed sad and depressed.

In the evening, as she was about to go down to tea, it was brought to her with a message from the general to the effect that he was very tired and had gone to his room. Vaninka made some inquiries as to the nature of his indisposition, and when she found that there was nothing at all alarming about it, she instructed the valet who brought the message to carry her respects to her father and say to him that she was at his service if he had need of anyone or of anything. The general replied that he was grateful to her, but that he was in need of nothing save solitude and repose. Vaninka thereupon said that she, too, would keep her room for the rest of the evening, and the valet withdrew. He had no sooner left the room than Vaninka ordered Annouschka, her foster sister, who acted as her confidential maid, to

watch for Fœdor's return, and to let her know when he came.

At eleven o'clock the door of the house opened; Fœdor left his sledge, and went immediately to his room, where he threw himself upon a couch, worn out by the weight of his own thoughts. At midnight he heard a knock at his door; he rose, greatly astonished, and threw it open. It was Annouschka, come from her mistress to bid him go at once to her. Marveling much at this message, which he was very far from expecting, Fœdor obeyed.

He found Vaninka awaiting his coming, dressed all in white; and as she was even paler than usual, he paused awe-struck at the door, for it seemed to him as if he were looking at a statue all ready to be placed over a tomb.

"Come in," said Vaninka, in a voice wherein it was impossible to detect the least emotion.

Fœdor approached, attracted by that voice as the iron is attracted by the magnet. Annouschka closed the door behind him.

"Well," continued Vaninka, "what reply did my father make?"

Fœdor told her all that took place; the girl listened with impassive face, but her lips, which were the only part of her face where there was any indication of the presence of blood, became as white as her gown. Fœdor on the other hand was devoured by fever, and seemed almost like a madman.

"What do you propose to do now?" asked Vaninka in the same icy tone in which she had put the other question.

"You ask me what I propose to do now, Vaninka! What do you want me to do? What is there left for me to do, to avoid repaying my patron's kindness by some dastardly outrage, except to fly from St. Petersburg, and

lay down my life in the first corner of Russia where war happens to break out?"

"You are a fool," said Vaninka, with a smile in which there was a singular mixture of triumph and scorn; for, from that moment she realized her superiority to Fœdor, and that she was to rule over the rest of his life like a queen.

"Guide me, then," cried he; "command me; am I not your slave?"

"You must remain here," said Vaninka.

"Remain!"

"Yes; none but a woman or a child would admit defeat so at the first blow; a man, if he really deserves the name, struggles."

"Struggles! against whom? Against your father? Never!"

"Who spoke of struggling against my father? You must show a bold front to events, for the generality of men do not direct events, but, on the other hand, are governed by them. Make my father think that you are fighting down your love; let him believe that you have conquered it; as I am not supposed to know of what you said to him, he will have no suspicion of me, and I will ask for two years' delay, and obtain it. Who knows what may happen in those two years? The emperor may die, the man to whom my hand is promised may die, and my father himself, God guard him!—my father himself may die!"

"But if they demand that you ——"

"Demand!" interposed Vaninka—and a vivid blush overspread her cheeks, to vanish again instantly—"pray, who will demand anything of me? Not my father, surely; he loves me too much for that; and the emperor has enough causes of uneasiness in his own family, not

to care about disturbing the peace of other families. And then, there is always one last resource when all others have failed; the Neva flows three hundred yards from here, and its waters are deep."

Fœdor caught his breath; for there was such a world of stern resolution in the girl's wrinkled brow and compressed lips, that he realized that while it might be possible to break her, she could never be made to bend.

However, Fœdor's heart was too strongly inclined to the plan she proposed to seek new objections when the first were swept aside. And, even if he had had the courage to do so, Vaninka's promise to reward him in secret for the dissimulation he was compelled to practice in public, would have overcome his last scruples; furthermore, it should be said that Vaninka's resolute character, reinforced by her education which was strictly in harmony with it, gave her an influence over everybody about her, the general included, to which everybody yielded, without knowing why. Fœdor therefore agreed like a mere child to whatever she required of him, and the young girl's affection for him throve upon his subjugated will and her own satisfied pride.

It was some days after this nocturnal decision in Vaninka's apartments, that the scene occurred which our readers witnessed, when punishment was inflicted upon Gregory for some trivial fault, upon Vaninka's complaint to her father.

Fœdor, whose duty it was, as the general's aide-de-camp, to superintend Gregory's punishment, thought no more of the threatening words uttered by the slave as he left the courtyard. Ivan, the coachman, supplemented his performance as executioner by acting as physician, and applied compresses of salt-water to the sufferer's lacerated shoulders to heal the wounds. Gregory

remained in the infirmary three days, during which he revolved in his mind all possible methods of ensuring his revenge. At the end of three days he was cured and resumed his duties, and everyone, himself excepted, soon forgot what had occurred. If Gregory had been a true Russian he, too, would soon have forgotten his punishment, which is too familiar an experience to the barbarous children of Muscovy to be long or bitterly remembered. But Gregory, as we have said, had Greek blood in his veins; so he concealed his rancor, but remembered.

Although Gregory was a serf, the duties which he performed for the general had gradually led to a greater degree of familiarity between them than the other servants enjoyed. It must be remembered, too, that barbers the world over are allowed to take great liberties with their clients: this is due perhaps to the fact that one instinctively unbends somewhat to a man who holds one's life in his hands for ten minutes every day. So Gregory enjoyed the privileges of his position, and it almost always happened that the barber's daily visit to the general passed in conversation in which the talking was mostly done by him.

One day the general was to take part in a review; so he called Gregory before dawn, and as he was running the razor over his cheeks as gently as possible, their conversation fell upon Fœdor, or rather was led around to him by the barber, who spoke of him in the most eulogistic terms. This naturally led his master, who remembered the correction that had been administered to him under the auspices of the young aide-de-camp, to ask him if he had never discovered any imperfection which cast a shadow upon the noble qualities of him whom he held up as the model of perfection.

Gregory replied that except for his pride he considered Fœdor beyond reproach.

"Pride?" the general repeated in amazement; "why I should have said that that was the vice from which he is most free."

"I should have said ambition," rejoined Gregory.

"What's that? ambition?" said the general. "I fail to see any indication of ambition in entering my service; for after his performance in the last campaign, he might very well have aspired to a place in the emperor's household."

"Oh! there are ambitions and ambitions," said Gregory, with a smile; "some are ambitious of high office, others of an illustrious alliance; some wish to owe everything to themselves, others hope to make stepping-stones of their wives, and in such cases raise their eyes higher than they ought to raise them."

"What do you mean?" cried the general, beginning to understand what Gregory was coming at.

"I mean, Excellency," replied the barber, "that there are many people who are encouraged by kind treatment to forget their position, and to aspire to a higher position, although they are already so high that their heads swim."

"Gregory," exclaimed the general, "you are going into bad business, my word for it; for this is an accusation you are making, you know, and if I receive it as such, you will be required to prove what you say."

"By St. Basil, general, there's no business so bad that one can't get out of it with truth on one's side; nor have I said anything that I am not ready to prove."

"You persist, then," cried the general, "in claiming that Fœdor loves my daughter?"

"Ah!" rejoined Gregory, with the duplicity of his

race, "I didn't say that; your Excellency yourself said it. I haven't mentioned Mademoiselle Vaninka."

"Nevertheless, that's what you meant, isn't it? Come, answer frankly, as you aren't accustomed to do."

"It is true, your Excellency; that is what I meant to say."

"And in your judgment my daughter reciprocates his love, no doubt?"

"I fear it, both on her account and yours, Excellency."

"What makes you think it? Tell me."

"In the first place, Monsieur Fœdor never misses an opportunity to speak to Mademoiselle Vaninka."

"He is in the same house with her, would you have him avoid her?"

"When Mademoiselle Vaninka returns home late, and it so happens that Monsieur Fœdor is not with you, at whatever hour it may be, he is always at the carriage-door to offer his hand."

"Fœdor waits for me, and that is his duty," said the general, beginning to believe that the slave's suspicions were based upon mere appearances. "He waits for me," he continued, "because, at whatever hour of the day or night I return, I may have orders to give him."

"Not a day passes that he does not go to your daughter's apartments, although it is not customary to grant a young man such a privilege in such a family as your Excellency's."

"Most of the time he goes there because I send him," said the general.

"In the day-time, yes," rejoined Gregory; "but—at night?"

"At night!" cried the general, springing to his feet, and turning so pale that he was obliged to lean against the table for support.

"Yes, at night, your Excellency," replied Gregory, calmly; "and as I have, as you say, started in on a bad business, I will carry it through; besides, though it should bring more and greater punishment than the last upon me, I will not suffer so good a master to be deceived any longer."

"Be very careful what you say, slave, for I know your race, and you may be sure that, if the accusation which your desire for vengeance leads you to make is not supported by visible, tangible, positive proof, you shall receive the punishment due an infamous slanderer."

"I agree," said Gregory.

"You say that you have seen Fœdor go to my daughter's room at night?"

"I do not say that I have seen him go there, Excellency, but that I have seen him come out."

"When?"

"A quarter of an hour ago, as I was on my way to attend you Excellency."

"You lie," ejaculated the general, raising his hand, threateningly.

"That isn't according to our agreement, your Excellency," said the slave, stepping back. "I am not to be punished unless I fail to furnish proofs."

"But what are your proofs?"

"I just told you."

"And you expect me to believe your word?"

"No, but I hope you will believe your own eyes."

"How so?"

"The first time that Monsieur Fœdor is with Mademoiselle Vaninka after midnight, I will inform your Excellency, and then you can judge for yourself if I lie; but thus far, your Excellency, all the conditions of the service I desire to render you are unfavorable to me?"

"Why so?"

"Why, if I furnish no proof, I am treated as an infamous slanderer, well and good; but suppose I do furnish it, then what shall I have?"

"A thousand roubles and your freedom."

"It's a bargain, Excellency," calmly rejoined Gregory, replacing the razors in the general's toilet-case. "I hope that within the week you will do me more justice than you do at this moment."

With that, the slave went out, leaving the general convinced by his confident bearing that he was threatened by a great disaster.

From that moment, as may be imagined, the general listened to every word and noted every gesture that was exchanged between Fœdor and Vaninka; but he could detect nothing in the words or bearing of either to confirm his suspicions; on the contrary Vaninka seemed to him more cold and reserved than ever.

Eight days passed uneventfully; about two o'clock in the morning of the ninth day, Gregory knocked at the general's door.

"If your Excellency chooses to go to your daughter's apartments," said he, "you will find Monsieur Fœdor there."

The general turned pale as death, hurried into his clothes without a word, and followed the slave to Vaninka's door; there he dismissed him with a wave of the hand; but, instead of withdrawing, as the mute command bade him do, he hid around the corner of the corridor.

When the general believed himself to be alone he knocked; but there was no reply to his first summons. The silence proved nothing, however, for Vaninka might be asleep, so he knocked a second time, and his daughter's voice asked in a perfectly calm tone:

"Who is there?"

"I," said the general in a voice trembling with emotion.

"Annouschka," said Vaninka to her foster sister, who slept in the room adjoining her own, "open the door for my father. Excuse me, father," she added, "but Annouschka is dressing, and will be there in a moment."

The general waited patiently, for he could detect no emotion in his daughter's voice, and he hoped that Gregory was mistaken.

In a moment or two the door opened, and the general entered, casting his eyes over the room as he did so. There was no one in that room save Vaninka, who was in bed, perhaps a shade paler than usual, but perfectly calm, and with the filial smile upon her lips with which she always greeted her father.

"To what happy accident," she asked in her sweetest voice, "do I owe the honor of seeing you so late at night?"

"I wished to speak with you on an important subject," said the general, "and late as it is, I thought you would forgive me for disturbing your sleep."

"My father will always be welcome at his daughter's apartments, at whatever hour of the day or night it may please him to come there."

The general looked around him once more, and everything tended to confirm his belief that it was not possible for a man to be hidden in that room; but the other room?—

"I am listening," said Vaninka, after a moment's silence.

"Yes, but we are not alone," answered the general, "and it is important that no other ears should hear what I have to say to you."

"Annouschka is my foster sister, you know," said Vaninka.

"That makes no difference," the general rejoined; and he went, with a candle in his hand, to the door of the adjoining room, which was smaller than his daughter's.

"Annouschka," he said, "watch in the corridor, and see that no one is listening to us."

As he spoke, the general glanced sharply around the room; but there was no one there except the maid.

Annouschka did as she was told, the general went out behind her, and with another glance about the room, returned to his daughter and sat at the foot of her bed. He put out his hand, and Vaninka gave him hers unhesitatingly.

"My daughter," said the general, "I have something of importance to say to you."

"What is it, father?"

"You are almost eighteen, the age at which the daughters of Russian noblemen generally marry."

The general paused a moment to watch the effect of his words upon Vaninka; but her hand lay motionless in his. "A year ago I promised your hand," he continued.

"May I know to whom?" inquired Vaninka, coldly.

"To the son of the present privy councillor; what do you think of him?"

"He is a worthy, noble-hearted youth, so I am told; but I can have no opinion except what others form for me. Has he not been in garrison at Moscow for three months past?"

"Yes," said the general; "but in three months more he will return."

Vaninka made no sign.

"Have you nothing to say on the subject?" queried the general.

"No, father, but I have a favor to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"I would prefer not to marry until I am twenty."

"Why, pray?"

"I have made a vow."

"But suppose circumstances make it necessary for you to break it, and demand the celebration of the marriage at once?"

"What circumstances?" demanded Vaninka.

"Fœdor loves you," said the general, fixing his eyes upon her face.

"I know it," was the reply, in as indifferent a tone as if she were speaking of a stranger.

"You know it?" exclaimed the general.

"Yes, he told me so."

"When?"

"Yesterday."

"And you replied——"

"That he must go away."

"And he consented?"

"Yes, father."

"When does he go?"

"He has already gone."

"Why, he didn't leave me till ten o'clock," said the general.

"He left me at midnight."

"Ah!" said the general, breathing freely for the first time; "you are a good girl, Vaninka, and I grant what you ask, that is, two years more of grace. But remember that this marriage is of the emperor's making."

"My father will do me the justice to believe that I am too submissive a daughter to be a rebellious subject."

"Of course, Vaninka, of course. So Fœdor told you everything, did he?"

"Yes," said Vaninka.

"You knew that he came to me in the first place?"

"I did."

"Then you learned from him that your hand is promised?"

"He told me so."

"And he consented to go away? He is a noble, excellent youth, and shall have my protection wherever he goes. Oh! if my word had not been given, I love him so dearly, that if you had no objection, I would have given him your hand, 'pon my honor."

"Can you not take back your word?" Vaninka asked him.

"Impossible."

"Then we must redeem it," she said.

"Spoken like my daughter," said the general, kissing her. "Adieu, Vaninka. I do not ask you if you loved him. You have both done your duty, and I can ask you to do no more."

With that, he rose and left the room; Annouschka was in the corridor, and he motioned to her to go in, and went back to his own quarters. At the door of his bedroom he found Gregory.

"Well, your Excellency?" he said, inquiringly.

"Well, you were both right and wrong," said the general; "Fœdor loves my daughter, but my daughter doesn't love him. Fœdor went to my daughter's room at eleven last evening, but left her at midnight forever. But no matter; come to-morrow, and you shall have your thousand roubles and your freedom."

Gregory took his leave in a state of stupefaction.

Meanwhile Annouschka had returned to her mistress'

room, as she was ordered, and carefully secured the door. Vaninka at once leaped out of bed, ran to the door, and listened to the general's retreating footsteps. When she could hear them no longer, she darted to Annouschka's cabinet, and the two women at once set about removing a pile of linen which lay in the window recess. Under the linen was a large chest which closed with a spring. Annouschka pressed a button and Vaninka raised the lid. A cry of horror burst simultaneously from the lips of both; the chest had become a coffin; the young officer was dead from suffocation.

For a long while they hoped that it was nothing worse than a swoon; Annouschka dashed water in his face and Vaninka put salts to his nostrils, but all in vain. During the long interview between the general and his daughter, which had lasted more than half an hour, Fœdor, being unable to raise the lid of the chest, which was held in place by the spring, had died for want of air.

It was a fearful predicament; the two girls had a dead body on their hands, and Annouschka had visions of Siberia, while Vaninka, to do her justice, thought only of Fœdor.

They were equally in despair.

However, as the maid's despair was more selfish than her mistress', it was she who conceived a method of extricating themselves from the position they were in.

"Mademoiselle," she cried abruptly, "we are saved."

Vaninka raised her head, and looked at her attendant through the tears which filled her eyes.

"Saved!" she said, "saved! ourselves, perhaps, but he!"

"Listen, Mademoiselle," said Annouschka; "your situation is terrible, beyond any question; you have

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Fedor Romayoff, concealed in a chest in Vaninka's room, dies of suffocation.

met with a terrible misfortune, I admit; but your position and your misfortune might both be more terrible if the general should know——."

"Pray, what does it matter?" said Vaninka. "I would weep for him now before all the world."

"Yes, but in the eyes of all the world you will be dishonored. To-morrow your slaves, and day after to-morrow all St. Petersburg will know that a man died in your apartments. Consider that your honor is your father's honor, and your family's."

"You are right," said Vaninka, shaking her head as if to drive away the gloomy thoughts with which her brain was teeming; "you are right. What shall we do?"

"Mademoiselle knows my brother Ivan?"

"Yes."

"We must tell him the whole thing."

"Can you dream of such a thing?" cried Vaninka; "trust our secret to a man! to a man, do I say? to a serf, a slave!"

"The lower the slave's station," replied the maid, "the surer we are of our secret, for he will have everything to gain by keeping it for us."

"Your brother gets tipsy," said Vaninka, with mingled dread and repugnance.

"True; but where will you find a man with a beard who doesn't do as much? My brother drinks less than many another, so there is less to fear from him than from most. Besides, in such a position as ours we must take some risk."

"You are right," said Vaninka, recovering the firmness which was natural to her, and which grew greater as the danger increased.

"Go and find your brother."

"We can do nothing this morning," said Annouschka, putting aside the curtains. "See, day is breaking."

"But what shall we do with the poor boy's body?"

"Let it lie where it is through the day, and this evening while you are at the play, my brother will take it away."

"True, true," murmured Vaninka, in a strange tone; "this evening I am to go to the play; I cannot miss it; something would be suspected. Oh! oh! my God! my God!"

"Help me, Mademoiselle," said Annouschka, "I am not strong enough alone."

Every vestige of color left Vaninka's cheeks; but under the spur of her imminent danger, she went resolutely to her lover's body, and lifting it by the shoulders while her maid lifted the legs, together they replaced it in the chest. Annouschka then put down the lid, turned the key in the lock, and placed it in her bosom. Then they threw back upon the chest the linen which hid it from the general's eyes.

The sun rose, and Vaninka, as the reader will suspect, had not closed her eyes. Nevertheless she went down to the dining-room at the breakfast hour, to avoid giving her father the least cause for suspicion. From her pallor might have thought that she had risen from the dead, but the general attributed it to the fact that her rest had been broken by him.

Chance served Vaninka wondrously well when it suggested to her to say that Fœdor had gone away; for not only was the general not surprised at his failure to appear, but, as his very absence was his daughter's justification, he himself invented an excuse for it, saying that his aide-de-camp had left the city on business for him. As to Vaninka, she carefully kept away from her

room until the time came for her to dress. A week before she had been at the play with Fœdor.

Vaninka might readily have avoided going with her father by pleading a slight indisposition; but she feared two things if she did so: in the first place she feared that she might make the general anxious about her, so that he would remain at home himself, and increase the difficulty of removing the body; secondly, she dreaded to have to face Ivan, and to blush before a slave. She preferred therefore to make a superhuman effort; and so she went to her room, accompanied by her faithful Annouschka, and began to array herself with as great care as if her heart were filled with joy.

When the cruel toilet was completed, she ordered Annouschka to lock the door, for she wished to look once more upon Fœdor's face, and say farewell forever to his body, who had been her lover. Annouschka obeyed, and Vaninka, her brow wreathed with flowers, and her breast glistening with pearls and diamonds, but beneath it all, colder than a statue, walked to her maid's chamber, with the slow, measured step of a phantom. When she reached the chest, Annouschka opened it once more, and Vaninka, without a tear, without a sigh, but with the profound, lifeless tranquillity of despair, stooped over Fœdor, took a plain gold ring from his finger, and placed it between two superb ones upon her own, and said, as she put her lips to his forehead:

"Adieu, my betrothed."

At that moment she heard steps approaching her door. A footman came from the general to ask if his daughter was ready. Annouschka let fall the lid of the chest, and Vaninka, opening the door herself, followed the messenger, who went before with a light, and

left her foster sister to perform the cruel, abhorrent task she had undertaken.

An instant after, Annouschka saw the carriage containing the general and his daughter drive out through the great gateway.

She waited half an hour, then went down in search of Ivan. She found him drinking with Gregory, to whom the general had been as good as his word, and had given him that day his thousand roubles and his freedom. Happily they were only beginning their festivities, and Ivan's head, therefore, was still so clear that his sister had no hesitation in confiding her secret to him.

Ivan followed her to her mistress' apartment. There she reminded him of all that Vaninka, who was generous for all her pride, had allowed his sister to do for him. The few swallows of brandy Ivan had already taken inclined him to gratitude; a Russian's drunkenness is essentially affectionate, and Ivan protested his devotion in such unqualified terms that Annouschka hesitated no longer, but raised the lid of the chest, and showed him Fœdor's body.

At the horrible sight, Ivan was speechless for a moment; but he had soon made a mental calculation of the value of the possession of such a secret in money and other benefits. So he swore by all that was most sacred never to betray his mistress, and, as Annouschka hoped he would do, offered to dispose of the captain's body. It was easily done. Instead of returning to drink with Gregory and his companions, Ivan hitched a horse to a sledge, loaded it with straw, placed a crowbar underneath, and drove around to the door giving access directly to Vaninka's apartments. Then, having made sure that no one was playing the spy upon him, he took

the body in his arms, hid it under the straw, took his seat upon it, ordered the gate to be opened, followed the Nevsky Prospect as far as the Znamenie Church, passed through the shops of the Rejestwenskoi quarter, drove out upon the Neva, and stopped halfway across the frozen stream, opposite the abandoned Church of St. Magdalen. There, under cover of the darkness and solitude, hidden behind the dark mass of his sledge, he began to attack the ice, which was eighteen inches thick, with his crowbar, and when he had made a hole of sufficient size, after searching Fœdor's pockets, and appropriating what money he had upon him, he slipped the body through the ice, head first, and drove back to the palace, while the swift current of the Neva bore the body away to the Gulf of Finland.

An hour after the wind had formed a new ice-crust, and there was no trace remaining of the opening made by Ivan.

At midnight Vaninka returned with her father. An internal fever had consumed her all the evening, so that she had never appeared so lovely; the result being that she was fairly overwhelmed with the homage of the noblest and most gallant courtiers.

She found Annouschka awaiting her in the vestibule to take her cloak. As she handed it to her, Vaninka questioned her with one of those glances which say so many things.

"It is all over," whispered the maid.

Vaninka drew a long breath as if a mountain had been lifted from her breast.

Marvelous as was her self-control, she could no longer endure her father's presence, and she excused herself from remaining to take supper with him, by pleading fatigue.

She went up to her own room, and as soon as the door was closed tore the flowers from her hair, the jewels from her breast, ordered Annouschka to cut away the corsets which were stifling her, and threw herself on the bed, where she could weep and writhe at her ease. Annouschka thanked God for the explosion; her mistress' tranquillity terrified her more than her despair.

When the paroxysm had passed, Vaninka was able to pray. She passed an hour on her knees, and then, at her maid's urgent entreaty, went to bed, while Annouschka took her place at her feet. Neither of them could sleep; but the tears that Vaninka shed relieved her oppressed heart.

Annouschka was entrusted with the duty of rewarding her brother; too considerable a sum given all at one time to a man with a beard might cause remark. So Annouschka simply told her brother that when he wanted money he had but to ask her for it.

Gregory took advantage of his freedom, and turned his thousand roubles to good account at the same time, by purchasing a little wine-shop on the other side of the canal, where he soon began to do a thriving business, thanks to his address and his large acquaintance among the servants of the best families of St. Petersburg; and in a short time the Red Inn, which was the name of Gregory's establishment, had a great reputation.

Another had succeeded to his duties, and except for Fœdor's absence, everything went on as usual in Count Tchermayloff's household.

Two months passed, and no one had conceived the least suspicion of what had taken place, when the general sent a message to his daughter, requesting her to come to his room, one morning before the usual breakfast hour. Vaninka trembled with apprehension, for

everything was a cause of terror to her since the fatal night. She obeyed, nevertheless, and went downstairs, summoning all her strength.

The count was alone; but at the first glance Vaninka saw that she had nothing to fear from the interview. The general was waiting for her with that paternal expression which his face invariably wore whenever he was with his daughter. She approached him, therefore, calm as always, and gave him her forehead to kiss.

He motioned to her to be seated, and handed her an open letter. Vaninka looked wonderingly at her father, then let her eyes rest upon the letter; it contained the intelligence that the man to whom her hand was promised had been killed in a duel.

The general watched his daughter's face keenly to note the effect of this news upon her, and despite her power to control her emotion, such a concourse of painful thoughts, regretful and remorseful to the last degree, assailed her mind, as she reflected that she was free again, that she could not entirely conceal her emotion. The general perceived it, and attributed it to the love which he had long suspected that his daughter bore his young aide-de-camp.

"Well," he said, with a smile, "I see that all is for the best."

"How so, father?"

"Why, of course," continued the general; "didn't Fœdor go away because he loved you?"

"Yes," murmured the girl.

"Very good! now he can return."

Vaninka made no reply; her eyes avoided her father's glance, and her lips trembled.

"Return,——" she said after a moment.

"Yes, of course. We shall be very unlucky," continued the general, smiling, "if we cannot find someone in the

house who knows where he is. Just make inquiries, Vaninka; then tell me the place of his exile, and I will lookout for the rest."

"No one knows where Fœder is," muttered Vaninka in a hollow voice, "no one but God—no one!"

"What's that!" cried the general; "you have not heard from him since the day he disappeared?"

Vaninka shook her head; her heart was so terribly contracted that she could not speak.

The general's face assumed a grave expression.

"Do you fear that something has gone wrong with him?" he asked Vaninka.

"I fear that there is no more happiness for me on earth," she cried, sinking under the violence of her grief. "Let me leave you," she continued after a moment, "I am ashamed of what I said."

The general, to whom Vaninka's outburst indicated nothing more than regret at having let the avowal of her love escape her, kissed her on the forehead, and allowed her to go, hoping that it would be possible to find Fœdor notwithstanding the discouraged air with which she spoke of him.

That same day he went to the emperor, told him of Fœdor's love for his daughter, and craved permission to bestow her hand upon him, as death had put an end to her prior engagement. The emperor gave his consent, whereupon the general solicited another favor. It was one of the emperor's good-humored days, and he was inclined to grant it, so the general told him that Fœdor had disappeared two months before, and that nobody, his daughter not excepted, had any idea where he was, and begged him to cause search to be made for him. The emperor at once sent for his grand master of police, and gave him the necessary orders.

Six weeks passed without developments. Vaninka, since the day of the letter, had become more sad and depressed than ever; vainly did the general try from time to time to encourage her to hope; Vaninka would shake her head and leave him. So at last the general ceased to mention Fœdor's name.

But such was not the case among the servants; the young aide-de-camp was a general favorite with them, and with the exception of Gregory there was not one who wished him ill; thus it was that after they learned that he had not gone away on business for the general, but had disappeared, his disappearance was the constant subject of conversation in antechambers, kitchen and stable.

There was another place where much thinking was done on the subject, and that was the Red Inn.

As soon as he heard of this mysterious disappearance, Gregory's suspicions returned. He was sure that he saw Fœdor go to Vaninka's room, and unless he came out while he was gone to warn the general, he could not understand how the latter had failed to find him with his daughter. Another thing which attracted his attention as having some possible connection with the incident, was Ivan's lavish expenditure of money ever since that time, a very extraordinary thing for a slave. But that slave was the brother of Vaninka's dear foster sister, so that, without being sure of anything, Gregory had a shrewd suspicion as to the source of his supplies. Another fact that tended to strengthen his suspicions was this: that Ivan, who had not only remained his devoted friend, but had become one of his best customers, never mentioned Fœdor's name, holding his peace when he was spoken of in his presence, and making no other reply to the most persistent questioning on the subject than: "Let us talk about something else."

About this time came the Twelfth Night. A great day at St. Petersburg is the Twelfth Night, for it is also the day of the blessing of the waters. As Vaninka had attended that ceremony, and was exhausted from standing two hours on the Neva, the general did not go out in the evening, and gave Ivan a holiday. Ivan seized the opportunity to visit the Red Inn.

There was a crowd at Gregory's hostelry, and Ivan was a welcome addition to the honorable society there gathered, for they knew that he commonly came with well-lined pockets. On this occasion he maintained his reputation in that regard, and had no sooner arrived than he began to jingle the kopecks to the great envy of those present. When he heard that significant sound, Gregory ran up with a bottle of brandy in each hand, welcoming him with the greater cordiality because he knew that when he was Ivan the Amphitryon, there was a double profit for him. Gregory, as dealer and as guest. Ivan did not disappoint his two-fold hope, and Gregory was duly invited to bear a hand in the consumption of his own liquor.

The conversation fell upon slavery, and some of the poor fellows who had no more than four days in the year to rest from their unending fatigue, were very emphatic on the subject of Gregory's good fortune in securing his freedom.

"Bah!" said Ivan, beginning to feel the effects of the brandy, "there are slaves who are freer than their masters."

"What do you mean by that?" queried Gregory, refilling his glass with brandy.

"I mean happier," replied Ivan hastily.

"That is hard to prove," said Gregory, skeptically.

"Why so? Our masters are hardly born before they

are put into the hands of two or three pedants, a Frenchman, a German, and an Englishman; whether he likes them or hates them he must stay in their society until he's seventeen, and, willy-nilly, must learn three barbarous tongues at the expense of our beautiful Russian tongue, which he sometimes has forgotten completely by the time he has learned the others. Then if he wants to be anybody, he must join the army; if he's a sub-lieutenant, he's the slave of the lieutenant; if he's a lieutenant, he's the captain's slave; if he's a captain, the major's, and so on up to the emperor who isn't anybody's slave, but some fine day they surprise him at the table, or when he's out for a drive, or in bed, and poison him, or stab him, or strangle him. If he's a civilian, that's another matter, there's a wife that he doesn't care for; there are children that come from he knows not where, but he must take care of them; he has an everlasting struggle to carry on, if he is poor to feed his family, and if he's rich to keep his intendant from robbing him and his farmers from deceiving him. Do you call that living? While we, damme, are born, you see, and that's the only trouble we cause our mothers; for after that it's the master's business to look out for us. He feeds us; he selects our trades—trades always easy to learn, unless one is a mere brute. If we are sick his doctor attends us for nothing; for it would be the master's loss if we died. If we are well, we are sure of our four meals a day and a good, warm room to sleep in at night. If we fall in love there is never any hindrance to our marriage unless the girl doesn't love us; if she does, the master himself urges us to be married at once, for he wants us to have as many children as possible. If the children come he does for them what he has done for us. Find me many great noblemen as happy as their slaves."

"True, true," assented Gregory, filling his glass again with brandy; "but with all that, you are not free."

"Free to do what?" demanded Ivan.

"Free to go where you choose and when you choose."

"I? I'm free as the air," said Ivan.

"Stuff and nonsense!" said Gregory.

"Free as air, I tell you; for I have kind masters, particularly a kind mistress," continued Ivan, with a significant smile, "and I have only to ask and it's done."

"What's that? Suppose that after getting drunk here with me to-day, you ask leave to come and get drunk again to-morrow," retorted Gregory, who in his eagerness to challenge Ivan did not neglect his own interests; "suppose you should ask that——"

"I should come," said Ivan.

"You would come again to-morrow?"

"To-morrow and the day after and every day if I choose."

"It is a fact that Ivan is the young mistress' favorite," said another of the count's slaves, who was there enjoying the liberality of his comrade.

"Very good," said Gregory; "but assuming that you could get permission so often, your money would soon give out."

"Never," exclaimed Ivan, tossing off another glass of brandy, "Ivan's money will never give out as long as there's a kopeck in Mademoiselle's purse,"

"I didn't know she was so liberal," sneered Gregory.

"Oh! you have no memory, my friend; you know very well that she doesn't haggle where her friends are concerned; witness the blows with the knout——"

"I wasn't speaking of that," returned Gregory; "I know that she's free enough with her blows, but as to

her money, that's another matter, for I never saw the color of it."

"Well, do you want to see the color of mine," said Ivan, getting drunker and drunker; "if you do, look at it: here are kopecks and sorok-kopecks; here are blue notes worth five roubles, here are pink notes worth twenty-five; and to-morrow, if I please, I can show you white ones worth fifty. Here's to Mademoiselle's health!"

And Ivan once more held out his glass, which Gregory filled to the brim.

"But does money pay for the contempt?" said he, pressing Ivan more closely.

"Contempt!" echoed Ivan. "Contempt! Who has contempt for me?" You, because you are free? Fine freedom yours is! I would rather be a well-fed slave than a hungry freeman."

"I mean the contempt of our masters," Gregory rejoined.

"The contempt of our masters! Ask Alexis or Daniel here if the young mistress despises me."

"It's a fact," said the two slaves appealed to, both of whom belonged to the general, "that Ivan must have a charm; for they never speak to him except as they would speak to a nobleman."

"Because he is Annouschka's brother," said Gregory, "and Annouschka is the young mistress' foster sister."

"Perhaps that's the reason," said the slaves.

"That or some other reason," retorted Ivan; "but it is just that, nothing else."

"But suppose your sister should die?" said Gregory; "ah!"

"If my sister should die, it would be a pity, because my sister's a good girl; here's my sister's health! But if she should die, it wouldn't make any difference; they

respect me on my own account, and because they fear me. There you have it!"

"They fear my lord Ivan!" exclaimed Gregory, roaring with laughter. "That means, of course, that if my lord Ivan should tire of receiving orders, and begin to give them, he would be obeyed."

"Perhaps so," said Ivan.

"He said: 'perhaps so'!" cried Gregory, laughing louder than ever; "he said: 'perhaps so'! did you hear him, you fellows?"

"Yes," said the slaves, who had drunk so much that they could only answer in monosyllables.

"Well! I no longer say: 'perhaps so'; now I say: 'for sure.'"

"Ah! I would like to see that," said Gregory; "I would give something to see that."

"Very good! send away all these fellows who are drinking themselves drunk like swine, and you shall see it for nothing."

"For nothing!" said Gregory; "you're joking! Do you fancy I give them their drink for nothing?"

"Look you; how much will they spend for your execrable brandy between now and midnight, when you are obliged to close your den?"

"Oh! about twenty roubles."

"Here are thirty; turn them out, and let us be by ourselves."

"My friends," said Gregory, taking out his watch, "it's almost midnight, and you know the governor's order; so, off with you."

The Russians accustomed to passive obedience retired without a murmur, and Gregory was left alone with Ivan and the other two of the general's slaves.

"Well, here we are by ourselves," he said; "what do you propose to do?"

"What should you say," rejoined Ivan, "if, in spite of the late hour and the cold, and although we are slaves, Mademoiselle should leave her father's house, and come here and drink our health?"

"I say that you ought to seize the opportunity to tell her to bring a bottle of brandy with her," sneered Gregory, with a contemptuous shrug; "there is probably some of better quality in the general's cellar than in mine."

"There is better brandy there," said Ivan, as if he were perfectly sure of that at least, "and the young mistress will bring a bottle of it."

"Are you mad?" said Gregory.

"He is mad!" the two slaves repeated mechanically.

"Ah! I'm mad, am I?" said Ivan; "all right; do you hold to your bet?"

"What do you bet?"

"Two hundred roubles against whatever I choose to drink at your place for a year."

"Done," said Gregory.

"Are your comrades in it?" anxiously inquired the two *moujiks*.

"They are," said Ivan, "and that being so we will reduce the term to six months. Does that go?"

"It goes," said Gregory.

The parties to the wager shook hands on it, and the thing was done.

Thereupon, with an assumed air well calculated to confound the witnesses of the strange scene, Ivan took his fur-lined caftan, which he had taken the precaution to hang near the stove, wrapped himself in it, and went out.

After half an hour's absence he reappeared.

"Well?" cried Gregory and the others with one voice.

"She is following me," said Ivan.

The three topers gazed at one another in stupefaction; but Ivan tranquilly resumed his seat among them, poured a fresh bumper, and said, as he raised his glass:

"To Mademoiselle: it's the least we can do to acknowledge her good-nature in coming so far to join us, on such a cold night, with the snow falling fast."

"Annouschka," said a voice outside, "knock at the door, and ask Gregory if some of our people aren't here."

Gregory and the two slaves once more stared at one another, speechless with wonder, for they recognized Vaninka's voice; Ivan meanwhile had thrown himself back in his chair with impudent assurance.

Annouschka opened the door, and they could see the snow falling fast, as Ivan said.

"Yes, Mademoiselle," said the maid, "my brother is here, and Daniel and Alexis too."

Vaninka entered the wine-shop.

"My friends," she said, smiling strangely upon them, "I was told that you were drinking my health, and I have brought you something in which to drink it. Here's a bottle of old French brandy, which I selected for you from my father's cellar. Hold your glasses."

Gregory and the two slaves obeyed with the hesitating slowness of astonishment, while Ivan put his glass forward with the utmost effrontery. Vaninka filled them all to the brim, and as she saw that they had some hesitation about drinking:

"Come, my friends, to my health," she said.

"Hurrah!" cried the topers, reassured by their noble visitor's good humor and her familiar way of addressing

them; and they emptied their glasses at a draught. Vaninka immediately filled them again, and then placed the bottle on the table.

"Empty this bottle, my friends," she said, "and don't mind me; with the permission of the master of the house, we will wait by the stove until the storm abates."

Gregory tried to rise to push two stools nearer the stove; but he seemed to be completely overcome by the liquor he had consumed, and fell back upon his bench, vainly struggling to stammer an excuse.

"No matter! it's all right!" said Vaninka; "don't put yourselves out for us. Drink, my friends, drink!"

The guests availed themselves of the permission, and each of them drank the contents of the glass that stood in front of him; Gregory had no sooner emptied his than he fell under the table.

"Good!" Vaninka whispered her maid, "the opium is taking effect."

"But what do you intend to do?" asked Annouschka.

"You will see directly."

The two *moujiks* were not slow to follow the example of the host, and they fell side by side upon the floor. Ivan held out longer, struggling against the desire to sleep, and trying to sing a bacchanalian song; but his tongue soon refused to do his bidding, and he fell senseless beside his comrades while he was searching for the tune, and stammering over words he could not pronounce.

Vaninka instantly left her seat, and darted a flaming glance at the men, and called them one after another by their names, not daring to trust her eyes alone, but not one of them answered. Then she clapped her hands and exclaimed joyously:

"Now is the time."

She went to the end of the room, and took a handful of straw which she carried to one of the corners, did the same with the three other corners, and then, pulling a burning brand from the stove, set fire to the four corners one after the other.

"In God's name, what are you doing?" cried Annouschka, beside herself with terror, and trying to stop her.

"I am burying our secret in the ashes," was the reply.

"But my brother! My poor brother!"

"Your brother is an infamous scoundrel, who betrayed us; and we are lost if we do not destroy him."

"Oh! my brother! my poor brother!"

"You may die with him if you choose," said Vaninka, accompanying the suggestion with a smile which proved that she would not have been very sorry to have Annouschka carry her sisterly love to that point.

"But look at the fire! look at the fire!"

"Let us go," cried Vaninka; and she dragged the weeping girl away, closed the door behind them, and threw the key far off into the snow.

"In heaven's name, let us hurry home," sobbed Annouschka. "Oh! I cannot look at the frightful sight!"

"On the other hand, we stay where we are," said Vaninka, grasping her attendant's wrist with almost masculine strength; "we will stay here until the house falls in upon them, and we are certain that not one of them escapes."

"O Lord God!" cried Annouschka, falling on her knees, "have pity on my poor brother, for death will bring him into your presence before he has had time to prepare himself to appear before you."

"Yes, yes, pray," said Vaninka; "that is right, for I seek to destroy their bodies, not their souls. Pray, I give you leave."

VANINKA

Vaninka, after drugging Ivan and his companions, sets fire to the Red Inn.

J. WAGREZ

And Vaninka herself stood erect with folded arms, her face lighted by the glare of the flames, while her servant prayed.

The fire did not burn long; the house was of wood, and the cracks stuffed with oakum, like all Russian peasants' houses; so that the flame soon burst out at the four corners, and the building was soon a mere blazing pile. Vaninka followed the progress of the fire with eager eye, trembling always lest she should see some half-burned spectre rush out of the flames. At last the roof fell in, and then, free from fear, she walked rapidly back to her father's house, which she and her companion entered without being seen, thanks to Annouschka's privilege of going in and out at any hour of the day or night.

The next day the burning of the Red Inn was the engrossing topic of conversation; four half-charred bodies were taken from the ruins, and as three of the general's slaves were missing, he had no doubt that three of the unrecognizable bodies were those of Ivan, Daniel and Alexis; it was equally certain that the fourth was Gregory's.

The cause of the fire was not ascertained, for the house stood by itself, and the snow-storm was so violent that the two women met no one on the lonely road. Vaninka was sure of her maid. Her secret, therefore, had died with Ivan.

But it was not long ere remorse took the place of dread. Absolutely inflexible as the girl was at the time, she was powerless against her memory. It seemed to her that by depositing her secret in the bosom of a priest, she would be relieved of the horrible burden; so she sought one noted for his abounding charity, and told him the whole story, under the seal of the confessional.

The priest was horrified at the ghastly tale. Divine pity is without bounds, but human remission has limits, beyond which it cannot go. The priest refused Vaninka the absolution she sought.

This was a terrible blow to her; it kept her away from the communion table; her absence there would be noticed, and could be attributed only to some incredible sin, or some undiscovered crime.

She fell at his feet, and in the name of her father, who would be dishonored by her shame, she besought him to mitigate the harshness of his decision.

The priest reflected long and deeply, and at last devised a method which would, as he thought, effect the desired end. Vaninka was to draw near the sacred table with the others; the priest would stop before her as before the others, but only to say: "Weep and pray." Those who were looking on would be deceived by his actions, and would suppose that she had received the body of Christ like the rest. This was the utmost that Vaninka could obtain.

Her confession was made about seven in the evening, and the solitude of the church and the darkness added to the horror of it. The priest returned home, pale and trembling. His wife Elizabeth was waiting for him, alone; she had just put her little eight-year-old daughter Arina to bed in the adjoining room.

She cried out in alarm when her eyes fell upon her husband's face, it was so pale and drawn. He sought to reassure her, but the trembling of his voice only increased her terror. She inquired as to the cause of his emotion. The priest refused to tell her. Elizabeth had heard the night before of her mother's illness, and thought that her husband had received some bad news of her; it was a Monday, a day of bad repute among the Russians, and

when she went out that morning Elizabeth met a woman in mourning; these were altogether too many omens not to presage misfortune.

She burst into sobs, crying: "My mother is dead!"

Vainly the priest tried to console her by solemn asseverations that his trouble did not arise from that source; the poor woman, engrossed by the one thought, replied to all his protestations with the single, never-ending cry of: "My mother is dead!"

At last, to draw her mind away from that idea, the priest admitted that his emotion was due to something he had heard in the confessional. But Elizabeth shook her head. It was a mere trick, she said, to conceal the cruel news from her. Her paroxysms, instead of subsiding, became more violent than ever, the tears ceased to flow, and she was on the verge of convulsions; so the priest made her swear that she would keep the secret—and the inviolable mystery of the confessional was betrayed!

Little Arina was awakened by Elizabeth's first shrieks, and being alarmed, and at the same time curious to know what was going on between her father and mother, she got out of bed, crept to the door, and overheard the whole story.

Thus, although the secret of the first misstep was beyond danger of betrayal, the secret of the crime had ceased to be a secret.

The day for administering the holy communion arrived; the Church of St. Simeon was crowded with the faithful. Vaninka went forward and knelt in front of the chancel rail. Behind her were her father and his aides-de-camp, behind them their servants.

Arina also was in the church with her mother; the inquisitive child was eager to see Vaninka, whose name

she had heard on that fatal night when her father was false to the first and most sacred duty imposed upon a priest. While her mother was praying, she left her chair, slipped forward among the faithful, and almost reached the rail. There she was brought to a standstill by the group of the general's servants; but Arina had not come so far to stop half way, and she tried to pass between them; they held her, but she persisted until one of them pushed her back rather roughly. The child fell over and hit her head against a bench; as she picked herself up, sobbing bitterly, she cried:

"You are very proud for a man with a beard! is it because you belong to the great lady who burned the Red Inn?"

These words, uttered in a shrill, piercing voice, amid the silence which preceded the administration of the sacrament, were heard by everybody. A heart rending shriek replied to them; Vaninka had fainted.

The next day the general was at the feet of Paul I. and narrated to him, as his sovereign and his judge, the whole of the long and ghastly story, which Vaninka, crushed by the weary struggle she had sustained, at last revealed to him during the night following the scene in the church.

The emperor, after listening to the extraordinary confession, sat for a moment deep in thought; then he rose from his arm-chair, walked toward a desk and wrote upon a loose sheet of paper the following decree:

"The priest having violated what should be inviolable, the secrecy of the confessional, will be degraded from the priesthood, and exiled to Siberia. His wife will accompany him; she is blameworthy for having failed to respect the sanctity of the office of a minister of God. The child will not leave her parents.

"Annouschka, the maid, will also go to Siberia for not notifying her master of his daughter's conduct.

"I retain all my esteem for the general: I sympathize with him, and weep with him for the deadly blow that has fallen upon him.

"As to Vaninka, I know of no penalty which can be inflicted upon her; I see in her only the daughter of a gallant soldier, whose whole life was devoted to the service of his country. Furthermore, the remarkable circumstances connected with the discovery of the crime, seem to remove the culprit outside the limits of my severity; I entrust her punishment to herself. If I have any appreciation of her character, if aught of dignity remains to her, her heart and her remorse will point out the path she should follow."

Paul I. handed this paper, unsealed, to the general, and ordered him to take it to Count Pahlen, Governor of St. Petersburg.

The next day the emperor's orders were executed.

Vaninka entered a convent, where she died toward the close of the year, of shame and grief.

The general was killed at Austerlitz.

NOTE.

We borrow all the details of this tragical story, as well as the decree of Paul I. *ipsissimis verbis*, from the excellent work published some twelve or fifteen years since by M. Dupré de Saint-Maure, and entitled *L'Ermite en Russie.*

All our thanks are his; ours the fear that we have detracted from the interest by substituting our words for his.

La Constantin.

LA CONSTANTIN.

1660.

Before entering upon this narrative we warn the reader that he will be but little concerned with the personage whose name appears at the top of these pages. Marie Leroux, widow of Jacques Constantin, and Claude Perregand, her confederate, cut but little figure in the history of great criminals. The biographies of individuals of that class make no mention of them, but the crimes of which they were guilty are none the less well authenticated. Our reason for not bringing them upon the stage until the moment that retribution overtook them, is that their crimes were of such a revolting description, and at the same time so undesirable to discuss, that it is not possible to go into details concerning them. We present in these pages, we hasten to admit it, an incomplete narrative, the denouement whereof is hurried forward and slurred over in a manner opposed to all the rules of the art; but all high minded readers will thank us for our reserve and for the absolute lack of proportion. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, inseparable from the subject to any self-respecting writer, we decided to bring these names out into the light, because in our opinion there is no one incident more admirably calculated to show in bold relief the abominable morals and rank corruption which pervaded all classes of society

at the termination of the "Wars of the Fronde," and made a fitting prelude to the licentiousness and villainy of the reign of the "Great King."

After this admission, we will introduce the reader, without further preamble, to a wine-shop on Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, on a certain evening in the month of November, 1658.

It was about seven o'clock. Three gentlemen were sitting around a table in the low, smoking room; they had already emptied several bottles, and some scheme, doubtless of a most extravagant nature, had just been evolved from their mad brains, for they were roaring with laughter all three.

"*Pardieu!*" said one of them, when the first paroxysm of this noisy mirth had subsided somewhat, "I must confess that that would be a glorious trick."

"Magnificent! and if you say the word, De Jars, we will try it no later than this very evening."

"Agreed, friend Jeannin, provided that the scheme doesn't scandalize my pretty nephew here," added Commander de Jars, passing the back of his hand caressingly across the cheek of the young man who sat beside him.

"Ah ça! De Jars," rejoined Treasurer Jeannin, "that word you just used makes me prick up my ears. For some months now this Chevalier de Moranges has been trotting around at your side, sticking to you like your shadow. You have never told us anything about this nephew. Where the devil did he come from?"

The commander pressed the chevalier's knee under the table. He, to avoid the necessity of replying, filled his glass and began to drink slowly.

"Look you!" continued Jeannin, "do you want me to speak plainly to you, as I shall speak on the day that it pleases God to question me on the trivial sins of my

life? I don't believe a word of what you told us. There are no nephews except the sons of brothers or sisters. Now, your sister is an abbess and your brother died without children. I can see but one way for you to establish the relationship, and that is to confess that Love passed that way, and that your brother once sowed a few wild oats, or that Madame l'Abbesse—"

"No innuendoes, messire."

"Well, then, explain yourself! I am not your dupe, and may the hangman strangle me when I leave this wine-shop if I don't succeed in tearing your secret from you! Either we are friends, or we are not. You can afford to tell me what you conceal from others. What! you would ask me at need for my purse or my sword, and yet you play the mysterious with me! That is all wrong, I tell you! speak, or our friendship is at an end. And I give you fair warning that when I am once hot on a scent, I don't readily abandon it. I will know the truth, and then I will make it public at court and in the city. So you will be better advised to whisper it in my ear, which will close upon it like the tomb."

"But, my inquisitive friend," said De Jars, with his elbows on the table, and curling the end of his moustache with one hand, "if I were to attach the secret to the point of a dagger, wouldn't you be afraid of pricking your fingers if you decided to touch it?"

"I!" retorted the treasurer, imitating his companion's pantomime on the opposite side of the table. "I! why the doctors have always claimed that I have too much blood, and it would be doing me a service to draw off a little of it. I have everything to gain, and you everything to lose; for with your yellow skin, it's easy to understand that blood letting would bring you no relief."

"Do you mean that you would go to that length? Would you take the chances of a duel if I forbade you to try to discover what I am hiding?"

"Yes, 'pon honor. Well! what is your decision?"

"My dear child," said De Jars to the young chevalier, "we are caught, and we must make the best of it. You don't know this great fellow as I do; he's more stubborn than you would think. There's one way to make an ass go ahead, when he vows he won't budge, and that is to pull him backward by the tail, you know. But when an idea, good or bad, has found its way into his hard pate, all the devils of hell can not pull it out. More than that he's a clever swordsman. The best course is to agree to whatever he asks."

"Do as you please," the young man replied. "You know my secret, and how important it is for me that it should not be discovered."

"Oh! Jeannin has some good qualities mingled with vices, and discretion must be placed in the front rank; it is the corrective of his curiosity, and a quarter of an hour hence he would lay down his life rather than say anything, just as he would risk his skin now to find out what we would rather not tell him."

Jeannin nodded assentingly, refilled the glasses, and holding his own to his lips, said with a triumphant expression:

"I am listening, commander."

"Here goes. In the first place you must know that my nephew is not my nephew."

"And then?"

"That his name is not Moranges."

"What next?"

"But I will not tell you his real name."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know it myself, and the chevalier is no better informed than I."

"What nonsense is this?"

"It's the truth, I tell you. Some months since, the chevalier came to Paris, bringing a latter of introduction to me from a German whom I knew several years ago. He begged me to take him under my protection, and to help him in his investigations and his plans. As you said just now, Love had passed that way, and we do not know our father. Now the young man, being naturally anxious to make a figure in the world, and to arrange to have the author of his existence at least pay the debts he proposes to incur, was provided, when he arrived here with some clues which we are trying to follow up; in short, to convince you how necessary it is for us to act with the greatest prudence and with extreme discretion, I believe that we are on the right track, and that the person we are seeking is no less than the prince of the Church. But if the mine is exploded too soon, everything is lost. You understand, so don't let your tongue wag."

"Never fear," said Jeannin. "That's what I call speaking like a real friend. I wish you good luck, my gallant Chevalier de Moranges, and until you find your father, if you are in need of a little money, don't be bashful, the strong-box of the bank is at your service. *Pardieu!* De Jars, you were born tipsy, and there's not your like for wonderful adventures. This savors of spicy intrigues, and scandalous disclosures, and you were selected to handle it. You are a lucky rascal. It's only a few months since you had the most adorable good fortune sent you straight from heaven, a lovely damsel, who induced you to abduct her from the convent of La Raquette. But you wont show her to anyone, as if you

were jealous of her, or as if she were as ugly and old and wrinkled as that idiot of a Mazarin."

"I have my reasons," replied De Jars with a smile, "I have my reasons for acting as I do. The elopement made a good deal of talk, and the bigots are in no trifling mood. I am not jealous, for she loves me to distraction. Ask my nephew."

"Does he know her?"

"We have exchanged all our secrets; the confidence between us is mutual and complete. The fair one, believe me, is good to look upon, and is worth all the creatures who play with their fans and ogle one from the balconies of the Place Royale, my word for it. Isn't it so, Moranges?"

"Those are my sentiments," said the youth, exchanging a singularly significant look with De Jars; "and you had best try, my uncle, to treat her well, or I will play you some trick."

"Aye! aye!" cried Jeannin; "I am much afraid, my poor De Jars, that you are warming a little serpent in your bosom. Have an eye to this coxcomb, this beardless chin. Frankly, my boy, are you on good terms with the charmer."

"Certainly I am."

"And you have no fear, commander?"

"None at all."

"And he is right. I answer for her as well as for myself, you understand. So long as he loves her, she will love him; so long as he is faithful, she will be faithful. Do you suppose a woman who arranges her own abduction cuts loose so soon from the man she chose to follow? I know her, I have talked with her often and long tête-à-tête; she is somewhat thoughtless, extremely fond of pleasure, free from prejudices, and from that absurd

reserve which holds other women back, and withal a good-hearted, devoted girl, incapable of a trick or a lie, but jealous, and not at all inclined to submit to be sacrificed to a real rival. Oh! if he deceives her, farewell to prudence and reserve, and then!——"

A glance of the eye and a pressure of the knee from the commander interrupted this panegyric, which the treasurer was listening to with open-mouthed, wide-eyed amazement.

"What fire!" he exclaimed; "and then, my handsome chevalier?"

"Why, then," resumed the young man, with a laugh, "if my uncle acts badly, I, his nephew, will offer myself to make good his wrong-doing. He will have no right to blame me. But until then he need have no fear, and he is well aware of it."

"Yes, yes, and to prove it, I will take Moranges with me this evening. He is young and needs to learn how to conduct himself; it will be a good thing for him to see and hear how a cavalier who has had some experience in amorous intrigues sets about making a fool of a coquette. It will be a lesson that may be of service to him later."

"*Peste!*" rejoined Jeannin, "I should be tempted to think that the child could get along very well without a teacher. However, that's your affair, not mine. To return to what we were saying a moment ago. Is it agreed, and shall we amuse ourselves by paying her ladyship in her own coin?"

"If you choose."

"I ask nothing better; it will give us something to laugh over. Do you know what is in the wind, Moranges?"

"Yes."

"Which of us shall call upon her first?"

De Jars pounded on the table with the hilt of his dagger.

"Wine, my lords?" asked the *cabaretier*, answering the call.

"No. Dice, and at once."

"Three throws each, and the highest throw wins," said Jeannin. "Begin."

"I throw for myself and my nephew."

The dice rolled on the table.

"Ace and three."

"My turn. Six and five."

"Five and two."

"Even. Four and two."

"Ace and blank."

"Double six."

"And you have the choice."

"I will go first," said Jeannin, leaving the table, and throwing his cloak about him. "It is half-past seven now, I will return at eight. I won't say adieu."

"Good luck to you."

He left the wine-shop, and went toward the river along Rue Pavér.

In 1658, at the corner of Rue Gît-le Coeur, and Rue du Hurepoix (the last-named street lay along the location of the present Quai des Augustins as far as Pont Saint-Michel) stood the mansion purchased and embellished by François I. for the Duchesse d'Etampes. It was beginning, if not to fall in ruins, to feel at least the ravages of time. Its rich interior decorations had lost their splendor, and had become veritable antique relics. The fashionable world had taken up its quarters in the Marais, on the Place Royale, and the profligate women and celebrated beauties had attracted to that region the buzzing swarm of old rakes and young gallants. Not one of them would have cared to dwell in the same mansion, or

even in the same quarter as the former royal concubine; it would have been beneath them, and would have amounted to a confession that their charms were fading in the public estimation.

The old palace had several tenants, however. Like the Emperor Alexander's provinces, its vast apartments had been subdivided, and such was the discredit into which it had fallen, that the bourgeoisie strutted about with impunity, where the most magnificent and proudest nobles of the kingdom formerly jostled and crowded one another.

There lived, in semi-isolation and despoiled of her former greatness, Angélique-Louise de Guerchi, sometime companion of Mademoiselle de Pons, and maid of honor to Anne of Austria. Her love-affairs and the public scandal they caused had led to her being dismissed the court, not perhaps because she had more heinous sins than many others to reproach herself with, but Mademoiselle de Guerchi was either unlucky, or very far from clever. Her lovers continually compromised her in the most unblushing way. Now, hypocrisy must of necessity be the rule at a court where a cardinal is the lover of a queen; and so Angélique was punished for the errors she could not conceal, by being publicly disgraced. Unfortunately her fortunes were dependent upon her success and the number and quality of her adorers; she had collected the débris of her prosperous days, sold a part of her finest clothing, and was now awaiting the dawn of better times, while looking on from a distance with envious eyes at the gay world which had banished her.

However, her case was not altogether hopeless. By a strange law, which proves nothing in favor of human nature, vice always has more paths open to success than

virtue; there is no courtesan so cried down that she cannot find a dupe ready to bear witness to a reputation which was long since torn to tatters. The very man who would suspect the virtue of a virtuous woman, and who would refuse to condone the slightest lapse in one whose conduct has always been beyond reproach, will stoop and pick up from the mire of the gutters a besmirched and tarnished reputation, protect it and defend it against sarcasm and insult, and devote his life to restoring some lustre to that unclean thing on which every man's finger has left a stain.

In the days of her social triumphs Commander De Jars and Treasurer Jeannin had both fluttered about Mademoiselle de Guerchi, and neither of them had been compelled to sigh long in vain. But in as few days as were required to enable them respectively to overcome her scruples, each of the two made a discovery; the former that she was sacrificing his physical attractions to the treasurer's doubloons, and the latter that the commander's manly beauty was playing a winning game against the charms of his strong-box. As neither of them had in view anything more than a mere intrigue of a day, and their hearts were not involved, their mutual discoveries led to no quarrel between them; they withdrew at the same time, without even making any complaint, but promising to have their revenge later, if opportunity offered. Other affairs of a similar nature diverted their minds from that laudable project. Jeannin had become attached to a less accessible charmer, who refused to yield to him for less than thirty thousand crowns paid in advance, and De Jars had been engrossed for some months by his adventure with the inmate of the convent of La Raquette, and by the business he had been about in conjunction with the young stranger whom he called

his nephew. Mademoiselle de Guerchi had not seen either of them again, and to tell the truth, she had hardly thought of them. She was busily engaged in ensnaring a certain Duc de Vitry, who had absented himself from court at the moment that the scandalous occurrence which caused his disgrace became known; he was a tall idler of some twenty-five or six years, brave as his sword, credulous as an old libertine, quick to draw blade against any insolent slanderer who dared to question the virtue of his inamorata, deaf to the uncomplimentary reports which were in circulation—in short, one of those men whom heaven has made expressly for the consolation of fallen women; such an one as in our days would be most acceptable to a retired *danseuse* of the opera, or a lioness *emerita*.

The only quality he lacked was that of being a bachelor. The duke had a wife whom he neglected according to the custom of those days, and who probably troubled herself very little on the subject of his infidelities. But she was none the less an insuperable obstacle; but for her Mademoiselle de Guerchi might well have conceived the hope of some day becoming a duchess. Meanwhile for some three weeks the gallant had not once set foot inside her door, nor given her any news of himself. He left Paris on a trip to Normandy, where he possessed extensive estates, and his absence, prolonged far beyond the limit he had himself assigned, began to be somewhat disquieting. What could detain him? Some new fancy perhaps. The young woman's fears were the more acute because thus far the affair had not gone beyond languishing glances and soft words. The duke had offered everything, and Angélique had refused all that he offered. A too prompt surrender would have justified the insulting rumors which were current concerning her, and, taking

warning by experience, she was determined not to compromise her future as she had compromised her past. But while playing at virtue, she had also to play at disinterestedness, and her pecuniary resources were drawing near their end. She had calculated her resistance with reference to the money that she still had; his departure and his long absence disturbed the equilibrium between her virtue and her revenue. The love-lorn Duc de Vitry therefore was in great danger about the time that De Jars and Jeannin determined to attack the fair one afresh. She was deeply absorbed in thought, and was asking herself in the utmost good faith, what it profited a woman to be virtuous, when she heard the sound of voices in the room adjoining her own. The door opened and the treasurer appeared.

As this interview and those which are to follow it, are to take place in the presence of witnesses, we are compelled to ask the reader to accompany us to another part of the same building.

We have said that it accommodated several tenants. The person who occupied the suite contiguous to Mademoiselle de Guerchi's was the widow of a former tradesman named Rapally, proprietor of one of the thirty-two houses which stood on both sides of Pont Saint-Michel, which was rebuilt in 1616 at the expense of the citizens, in consideration of the grant of said houses forever.

The widow Rapally gave herself forty years; those who knew her loaned her ten more; to avoid error, we will assume her to have been half-way between the two. She was a short, thick-set person, rather more than less stout than can fairly be called desirable; black of hair, dark of complexion, round-eyed, with pupils always in motion, active and restless, exacting beyond measure

when one once yielded to her wishes, but until then gentle and pliant.

She was at this time engaged in submitting to the whims of a certain person who had touched her heart. It was the direct opposite of the comedy that was being performed at Mademoiselle de Guerchi's. The widow was as deeply in love as Monseigneur le Duc de Vitry, and the object of her passion was no more sincerely enamored than was the queen's former maid of honor. The happy mortal whom her eyes were fixed upon was Master Quennebert, a notary of Saint Denis. This worthy scribe, still young, personally attractive, but somewhat embarrassed financially, pretended not to understand the advances of which the widow was by no means sparing. He treated her with a respectful reserve which she would gladly have dispensed with, and which sometimes made her doubtful of his affection. But it was impossible for her to complain, and she must needs resign herself to submit to the annoying and unwelcome consideration with which he enveloped her.

Master Quennebert was a man of sense and experience, and he had in his head a scheme which an obstacle independent of his will prevented him from putting in execution. He needed to gain time, and he knew that he should lose his freedom on the day that he gave the sensitive widow any legal claim upon him. A lover is discouraged if one lends a deaf ear too sternly to his requests. A woman on the other hand, who has to limit her answers to yes or no, necessarily is more patient. Master Quennebert's only cause for uneasiness was a distant cousin of the late husband, who pressed his suit more eagerly than the notary. But the latter's situation was such that he could adopt no other course. To make up for lost time, and resume the lead over his rival, he

showered fine speeches upon the widow, and flattered her with words of praise; but, in truth, he had no need to take so much trouble; he was beloved, and a fond glance from him would have won forgiveness for far greater offences.

An hour previous to the treasurer's arrival, there was a knock at the door of the old house, and Master Quennebert, curled, pomaded, arrayed for conquest in short, presented himself at widow Rapally's apartment. She received him with a more languorous air than usual, and seemed disposed to besiege him with such killing glances, that in order to escape that kind of death, he pretended to fall little by little into a state of profound sadness. The widow took alarm at this symptom, and said to him:

"What is the matter with you this evening?"

He rose; he had gained so much ground, and thenceforth he was free to go forward or fall back as he chose.

"The matter!" he replied with a distressing sigh; "I might deceive you, and give a false reason for my sadness; but I cannot lie to you. Yes, I am troubled and anxious, and when will it end? God only knows!"

"But what is it, pray?" said the widow, rising in her turn.

Master Quennebert took three long strides which brought him to the other end of the room.

"Why do you care to know? you can do nothing; it's a matter that is not spoken of between man and woman."

"What is it? an affair of honor?"

"Yes."

"Ah! *Mon Dieu!* you are going to fight!" she cried, rushing to him, and trying to seize him by the arm. "You are going to fight!"

"Would to God it were only that!" said Quennebert,

pacing the room again; "but don't be alarmed, my trouble concerns a sum of money I loaned some months ago to a villain who has disappeared. It was money that I held in trust, and three days hence I must repay it: two thousand francs!"

"That's a good deal; such a sum isn't easily procured at such short notice."

"I shall have to apply to some Jew who will roast me alive; but my reputation before everything!"

Madame Rapally gazed at him in consternation. Master Quennebert seemed to divine her thought, and added, after a moment's pause:

"I ought to say that I have the third part of the sum."

"Only a third?"

"With great care, and by exhausting every resource, I can raise eight hundred francs, but may I be damned in the other world or treated like a rascal in this, which comes to much the same thing for me, if I can put my hand on another sou!"

"Suppose somebody should offer you the twelve hundred francs you lack?"

"*Pardieu!* I would accept them," cried Quennebert, as if he had no suspicion of the name of the possible lender. "Do you know anyone, dear Madame Rapally?"

The widow nodded her head affirmatively, accompanying the motion with a passionate glance.

"Tell me his name quickly, and to-morrow morning he shall hear from me. Ah! what a service you will render me! and to think that I didn't want to mention it to you, for fear of distressing you! Tell me his name."

"Haven't you guessed it?"

"How do you suppose I can guess it?"

"What! not if you put your mind to it?"

"No," said Quennebert, with a most innocent expression.

"Have you no friends?"

"A few, yes."

"Would they not be delighted to accommodate you?"

"Perhaps. But I haven't asked any of them."

"Not one?"

"Except you——"

"Well?"

"Why, Madame Rapally, I am afraid that I understand you; but no, it's not possible; no, you didn't intend to humiliate me. I see; it's a riddle which my natural stupidity prevents my solving. Don't keep me in suspense any longer, but tell me the name that I try in vain to guess."

The widow, abashed by Master Quennebert's sensitiveness, blushed and hung her head, and did not dare to speak.

The notary looked at her for some time, fearing that he had been shocked too soon; he thought that he had a blunder on his hands to repair.

"You do not speak," he said; "evidently you were only joking."

She ventured to reply, timidly:

"I was speaking in all seriousness, but you have a way of looking at things, which isn't calculated to put one at ease."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Pray, do you think that your face is attractive now, with your glaring eyes, and your eyebrows puckered as if you were looking at some one who had insulted you?"

A sweet smile chased the wrinkles from Quennebert's

features. Growing suddenly bold, and taking an advantage of the suspension of hostilities, Madame Rapally went up to him, and took one of his hands in both hers.

"I will give you the money," she said.

He repulsed her gently, but with great dignity, and replied:

"I thank you, Madame, but I refuse."

"Why so?"

He resumed his march around the room. The widow, standing in the centre, turned around and around as he walked, to keep her face always toward him. The hippodrome performance lasted some minutes. At last Quennebert stopped.

"I bear you no ill will, Madame Rapally; it was your kind heart that led you to make the suggestion; but, once more, I cannot accept it."

"Well, I don't understand you. What is there to hinder? Why should you be ashamed to take it?"

"There need be no other reason than the thought of being suspected of confiding my trouble to you with a motive."

"But suppose you did, where would be the harm? People speak to be understood. You wouldn't have been ashamed to apply to another."

"And so you believe that I came here with that purpose!"

"*Mon Dieu!* I believe nothing, if you wish. I questioned you in the first place. I made you speak, and I know it perfectly well. But when you confide a secret to me, can you prevent my pitying you, and taking an interest in your trouble? After I have learned of your embarrassment, must I pretend to be gay, and laugh like a madwoman? What! I insult you because I can do you a service? That's a curious sort of delicacy."

"Are you astonished at it?"

"Nonsense! do you still think that I want to insult you? I consider you the most honorable man in the world. If anyone should tell me that Master Quennebert had been guilty of a base action, I would reply: 'That's a lie!' Does that satisfy you?"

"But suppose it should be said all over the city: 'Master Quennebert took money from Madame Rapally,' would it be the same as if they said: 'Master Quennebert has borrowed twelve hundred francs from Robert, the merchant, for example, or some other man?'"

"I see no difference."

"Well, I see a very great difference."

"What is it?"

"It is hard to explain, I agree; but——"

"But you exaggerate both the service and the gratitude you ought to feel. I believe I can guess the reason of your refusal. A gift would make you blush, wouldn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't propose to make you a gift. Borrow twelve hundred francs of me. How long do you need them?"

"I don't really know when I shall be able to repay them."

"Call it a year, and reckon the interest. Sit down there, you great baby, and write your note."

Master Quennebert made some further remonstrance, but yielded at last to the widow's urgent entreaties. It is needless to say that all his fine scruples were a mere farce. He was much in need of the money, not to replace a sum of which a faithless friend had despoiled him, but to satisfy his own creditors, who were losing patience, and threatening to prosecute him, and his only

purpose in calling upon Madame Rapally was to levy upon her generosity. His fictitious delicacy had no other motive than the fear of compromising himself too far, and so he allowed himself to be in a certain sense compelled by force to accept what he most ardently desired. His ruse was perfectly successful, and the fair lender felt her esteem increased tenfold by his lofty sentiments. The obligation was subscribed in due form, and the money counted down on the instant.

"How happy I am!" she said, while Quennebert was still playing at embarrassment and prudery, and eyeing askance the bag of crowns which lay on a table beside his cloak. "Do you return to Saint-Denis this evening?"

The notary would have known better than to answer yes, even if it had been his purpose to return home. He foresaw that she would reproach him with imprudence, insist upon the dangers of the road, which was indeed far from safe, and after having done her best to terrify him, would decide perhaps to offer him the hospitality of her roof, and he was by no means anxious for a tête-à-tête of indefinite length.

"No," he said, "I am to lie to-night at Master Terrasson's, Rue des Poitevins; I have notified him of my coming, and he expects me. Although he lives only a few steps from here, this money will oblige me to leave you sooner than I should have liked to do."

"You will think of me?"

"Can you doubt it?" replied Quennebert sentimentally. "You have forced me to accept the money, but I shall not be happy until I have repaid it. But suppose it should lead to a misunderstanding between us?"

"Ah! understand, that if you don't pay the note at maturity, I will prosecute you."

"I anticipate it."

"I will enforce all my rights as a creditor."

"And you will do quite right."

"I shall have no mercy."

And the widow laughed mischievously, and shook her finger at him.

"Madame Rapally," said the notary, desirous to put an end to the conversation which would eventually, he feared, take an affectionate turn, "Madame Rapally, pray add one further service to the many you have done me."

"What is it?"

"Gratitude which is only feigned does not weigh heavily upon him who feigns it, but genuine, sincere gratitude, such as I feel to you, is a heavy burden, I assure you. To give is much easier than to receive. Promise me that this shall not be mentioned between us for a year to come, and that meanwhile we shall continue on the same good terms as heretofore. Let me do my best to pay my debt honorably. I have no more to say; until then, mum's the word on this subject."

"I will do whatever you wish, Master Quennebert," the widow replied, and her eyes were moist with secret delight; "I did not intend to force an embarrassing obligation upon you, and I leave it all to you. Do you know that I am almost inclined to believe in presentiments now?"

"You are growing superstitious? Why so, pray?"

"I refused this morning to go into a little business transaction."

"So!"

"I had a sort of instinctive feeling that bade me resist the temptation, and not strip myself of ready money.

Fancy that I received a visit to-day from a great lady who lives in this house, in the suite next mine."

"What is her name?"

"Mademoiselle de Guerchi."

"And what did she want with you?"

"She called upon me and proposed to sell me, for four hundred francs, jewels which are well worth six hundred I know; or, if I preferred, I might loan her that sum on a pledge of the jewels. It seems that the young woman's affairs are in a bad way. De Guerchi! do you know the name?"

"It seems to me that I have heard it."

"They say that she has had some experiences which made a great deal of noise; but then, you know, so much of what one hears is false! She has lived a very retired life since she has been here; nobody visits her but one nobleman, a duke—Wait a moment! What is his name? The Duc de—Duc de Vitry; and for three weeks past even he hasn't been near her. I conclude from his absence and her proposal this morning, that they have had a quarrel, and she is beginning to feel the need of money."

"You seem very well posted as to this young woman's affairs."

"That is true, and still I never spoke to her until this morning."

"Who gave you your information?"

"Mere chance. The room adjoining this, and one of those that she occupies, were formerly one room. It was divided by a partition with tapestry nailed on either side; but at each end the boards have become loose, and you can see perfectly through little holes in the tapestry, without being seen. Are you inquisitive?"

"No more than yourself, Madame Rapally."

"Come with me. Some one knocked at the outer door a few moments ago, and no one else in the house but she is likely to receive visitors at this hour. It may be that the duke has returned."

"If we could look on at a scene of recrimination or reconciliation, it would be delightful?"

Although they were not to leave the widow's suite, Master Quènnebert took his hat and cloak and the blessed bag of crowns, and followed Madame Rapally, walking on tiptoe, while she crept along like a snail making as little noise as possible. They succeeded in opening the door between the rooms without too much noisy resistance on the part of the lock.

"Hush?" whispered the widow; "listen, they are talking."

She pointed to the place where he was to station himself, and crept softly herself to the other end of the room. Quennebert, who was by no means anxious that she should join him, motioned to her to blow out the light. Being secured against any attempt on her part to move, by the intense darkness which would make it impossible for her to take a step without stumbling against the furniture that separated them, he glued his face against the tapestry. A hole about the size of his eye permitted him to see all that took place in Mademoiselle de Guerchi's room. At the moment that his observation began, the treasurer, at Angélique's invitation, was about to take a seat in her vicinity, although at a respectful distance. Both of them were silent, feeling decidedly ill at ease at finding themselves face to face, with mutual explanations to make. The young woman had no idea of the purpose of her former lover's visit, and he feigned the emotion which was essential to the success of his undertaking. Master Quennebert had abundant

opportunity to examine them, and devoted his attention specially to Angélique. The reader desires doubtless to be informed as to the result of the notary's observations.

Angélique-Louise de Guerchi was a young woman of about twenty-eight, tall, dark and well-made. The life she had led had, it is true, somewhat marred her beauty, withered the fresh bloom of her complexion, and taken away something from the natural elegance of her figure, but those are the very women who, from time immemorial, have enjoyed the privilege of beguiling the other sex. It seems that dissipation destroys the appreciation of real beauty; the rake must be aroused with a bold glance, and alluring smile, and seeks enjoyment only where vice has left its mark.

In this aspect, Louise de Guerchi was admirably endowed, not that her face wore a noticeably impudent expression, or that her words as a general rule smacked of the irregularities of her life, but there was a secret, indefinable charm about her under a sedate and tranquil exterior. Many women were more regularly beautiful, but none exercised a more pronounced power of attraction. Let us add that she owed that power almost entirely to her physical qualities, for, except in the way of her profession, she was rather dull and slow-witted than otherwise. Being so constituted as to share the passions she excited, she was really defenceless against a persistent or skilfully conducted assault, and the Duc de Vitry must needs have been madly in love, that-is-to-say, blind, deaf, simple, and idiotic to the last degree, not to have found a score of opportunities of overcoming her resistance.

We have already adverted to the fair one's financial condition, and to her attempt that same day to turn her jewels into ready money.

Jeannin was the first to break the silence.

"My visit surprises you no doubt, my charming Angélique. But you will forgive me, will you not, for dropping in upon you so unexpectedly? I couldn't decide to leave Paris without seeing you once more."

"That is a compliment for which I am much obliged to you," she replied, "and I did not expect it of you."

"What are you still angry with me?"

She cast a half-disdainful, half-offended glance at him.

"I know that my conduct must have appeared very strange to you," he continued. "To leave a woman whom one loves—I dare not say who loves one,"—he added timidly, with a sigh, "to leave her abruptly, without explanation, is strange, I agree. But, consider, Angélique, I was jealous!"

"Jealous!" she exclaimed incredulously.

"I kept a strong hand on myself, and always concealed my fears from you. I have come here twenty times intending to seek a quarrel with you, to load you with reproaches, but in your presence, when I saw how beautiful you were, I forgot everything and thought only of my love. My suspicions disappeared before a smile, a word restored my calmness, and I was happy. But as soon as I was alone again, all my jealous terror returned. I fancied that I saw my rivals at your feet, and I worked myself into a fury again. Ah! you never knew how much I loved you!"

She allowed him to speak without interruption, and it may be that the same thought passed through her mind as through Master Quennebert's, who being a pastmaster in the art of lying, was communing thus with himself:

"There's a man who certainly does not mean one word of what he says."

"And now, Angélique," continued the treasurer, "do you still refuse to believe what I say?"

"Do you wish me to speak frankly, Messire Jeannin? Well, I do not believe you."

"Oh! you think, doubtless, that the diversions of society have led me to forget you, and that I have found consolation with other fair ones less cruel than you. I have not disturbed your seclusion. I have not spied upon your actions, or taken you by surprise. I have not surrounded you with invisible spies, who might perhaps have come and told me: 'If she has left the world, which insulted her, it is not from wounded pride, and to punish by her absence those who were unjust to her; no, she has taken refuge in solitude to hide her new love affair from all eyes.' That is what I have often thought, and yet I have respected your retirement; and to-day I would believe you, if you were to say to me: 'I love no one.'"

Jeannin, who was almost as stout as the regulation stage financier, stopped to take breath after this empty tirade, this rigmarole of commonplaces. He was not satisfied with himself, and inwardly cursed the sterility of his imagination. He would have liked to lay hold of a few sonorous phrases, and put his hand upon some pathetic, unstilted figure, but nothing came to him. He looked at Mademoiselle de Guerchi with a melancholy, heartrending expression. She sat motionless upon her chair, with the same incredulous expression upon her features.

He was fain to take up the one-sided conversation again.

"And so you refuse to say what I ask you to say. Then what I have been told is true! You love him!"

An involuntary exclamation of surprise escaped her.

"I must speak to you of him, it seems, to rouse you from this indifference, which is killing me. So my

former suspicions were well-founded; you deceived me for him! Ah! the instinct of jealousy did not lead me astray when it led me to break with that man, to reject the perfidious friendship he continued to force upon me! He has returned to Paris, and I will see him! But what am I saying? Returned? Perhaps he only pretended to go away, and has lain in hiding in this retreat, defying with impunity my despair and my vengeance!"

Thus far the young woman had played a cautious game. But now she utterly failed to comprehend what the treasurer was saying. Whom did he mean? The Duc de Vitry? She thought so at first. But the duke had known her only a few months, since his banishment from court. It could not be he, therefore, who had aroused the jealousy of her former lover; and then what did these words mean: "I rejected his friendship; he has returned to Paris," etc., etc.?"

Jeannin divined the embarrassment, and congratulated himself upon the manœuvre, which would force her to risk a step outside her intrenchments. In truth, there are women who are cruelly perplexed when one attaches no proper name to their lovers. It is as if one launched them into space, and compelled them to feel their way in the darkness. To say to them: "You love *him*," is equivalent to forcing them to ask:

"Whom do you mean?"

Mademoiselle de Guerchi did not employ that exact phrase; lost in conjecture, she simply said: "Your language surprises me, and I do not understand it."

The ice was broken. The treasurer made straight for his goal. Seizing one of Angélique's hands, he said to her:

"Have you not seen Commander de Jars?"

"Commander de Jars?" she repeated.

"Swear to me, Angélique, swear that you do not love him!"

"*Mon Dieu!* what put it into your head that I was thinking of him? It is more than four months since I saw him last, and I have no means of knowing whether he is dead or alive. He has been away from Paris, you say? this is the first I have heard of it."

"My fortune is yours, Angélique! tell me again that you love him not; that you have never loved him," he added, slowly, gazing at her with an expression of painful anxiety.

He had no purpose, however, to put her out of countenance; on the contrary he was well aware that a woman like Angélique is never more at her ease than when one gives her an opportunity to tell a falsehood of that nature. Furthermore he preceded his double question with the magic sentence: "My fortune is yours;" and the hope that those words awakened was well worth a trifling prevarication. So she replied boldly in a firm voice, and without so much as looking at the floor:

"Love him! never!"

"I believe you," cried Jeannin, throwing himself at her feet, and covering with kisses her hand, which he had not released. "In that case I can renew my old-time happiness. Listen, Angélique: I am leaving Paris; my mother is dead, and I am returning to Spain. Will you go with me?"

"I?"

"I hesitated a long while before coming to see you. I was so afraid of being repulsed. I go to-morrow. Leave Paris, abandon this cruel city which has so foully slandered you, and come with me. In a fortnight you will be my wife."

"You are mocking me!"

"May I fall dead at your feet, if that is not my desire! do you want me to sign it with my blood?"

"Rise," she said, deeply moved. "Here, then, is a man who loves me and will avenge all the insults that have been heaped upon me! I thank you a thousand times, less for what you are doing for me, than for the comfort you give me. Though you were to say to me now: 'I am obliged to part from you;' the pleasure of knowing that I have your esteem would make up for all the rest. It would be something that I should remember forever, as I have remembered you, ingrate, who accuse me of having deceived you!"

The treasurer seemed fairly drunken with joy. He talked in the most extravagant fashion, and repeated in a thousand different forms, with an abundance of absurd hyperbole, that he was the happiest of mortals. Mademoiselle de Guerchi, who did not propose to omit any necessary precautions, asked him in a cajoling tone:

"What could have made you so suspicious of the commander? Did he carry his knavery so far as to boast that I loved him?"

"He never said anything to me on the subject; I simply feared it."

She reassured him anew. The conversation lasted some time longer in an affectionate vein. They swore a thousand oaths, and made innumerable protestations of undying love. Jeannin feared that his proposed hasty departure might not be agreeable to his mistress; he offered to postpone it a few days, but she would not consent, and it was agreed that a carriage should call for Angélique at noon the next day, and take her to a point outside the city walls, where the treasurer agreed to meet her.

Master Quennebert, with eye and ear on the alert,

did not lose a single word of the conversation, and the treasurer's last proposition changed the current of his thoughts.

"*Pardieu!*" he said to himself, "there's a fat fool who seems to be bent on making an egregious ass of himself, and playing the part of a dupe. It's singular how clearly one sees things when one is not an interested party! My gentleman is allowing himself to be caught by a clever spider, or I don't know myself. Perhaps my widow is indulging in the same reflections that I am, and yet she's as blind as a bat with regard to what concerns herself. It's the way of the world; one has only the two roles to choose between; deceive or deceived. What is Madame Rapally doing?"

At that moment he heard a stifled chuckling at the other end of the room; but he was protected by the distance and the darkness, so he let her mumble to herself in her corner, and looked again into the next room. What he saw there confirmed him in his opinion. The hussy was dancing and laughing and clapping her hands, and felicitating herself upon her unexpected good fortune.

"What! he loves me to that extent!" she was saying to herself. "Poor Jeannin! and to think that I used to have no scruples— It is lucky that Commander de Jars, the most garrulous and conceited of men, never said anything to him! Yes, certainly we will go to-morrow. It isn't safe to give time for some indiscretion to give him the information he hasn't now. But the Duc de Vitry? Really I am sorry for him; but he goes away—he sends me no word—and then, he is married, too. Oh! if I only might appear again some day at court! Who would have believed this, *bon Dieu?* I have to reason with myself to persuade myself that it isn't a dream.

Yes, he was there, only a moment ago, at my feet, saying: 'Angélique, you shall be my wife!' Ah! indeed he may depend upon me to look to his honor! To betray a man who loves you like that, who gives you his name, would be infamous! and never, no never, shall he have reason to reproach me—I would prefer——"

Her soliloquy was interrupted by a loud, confused noise; at one moment like uproarious laughter, and the next like voices quarreling. Then there was a sort of yell, followed by silence for a few seconds. Unable to account for such an uproar in the usually peaceful old mansion, Mademoiselle de Guerchi walked toward the door of her room, to call for help, perhaps, or to fasten it on the inside, when it was thrown noisily open. She fell back in alarm crying:

"Commander de Jars!"

"Great God?" exclaimed Quennebert, behind his tapestry, "this is a diverting comedy! Has the commander also come to apologize? But what do I see?"

His eye had fallen on the young man whom De Jars had christened by the name and title of Chevalier de Morauges, and whose acquaintance the reader has heretofore made in the wine-shop of Rue Saint-André-des-Arts. The sight produced an electrical effect upon the notary. He trembled violently and gasped for breath; his knees bent under him, and for an instant a black cloud veiled his eyes. He recovered himself, however, and seemed to get the upper hand of his surprise and fright. He put his face to the partition again, and any body under heaven who had addressed him at that moment would have failed to elicit a response. He would not have heard the devil himself roaring in his ears, and a naked sword hanging over his head would not have made him change his position.

Before Mademoiselle de Guerchi had had time to recover from her alarm, the commander said to her:

"On my word as a gentleman, my love, if you had become abbess of Mont-Martre it couldn't be any harder to get access to you. I met a scoundrel below who tried to keep me from passing and forced me to administer severe chastisement. Is what I was told when I returned true? Are you doing penance, and do you intend to become a nun?"

"Monsieur," returned Angélique, with dignity, "whatever my plans may be, I have a right to be amazed at your violent intrusion at this hour of the night."

"First of all," rejoined De Jars, turning on his heel, "permit me to present my nephew, the Chevalier de Morauges."

"The Chevalier de Morauges!" Quennebert repeated beneath his breath, and the name was indelibly written on his memory.

"A young man," the commander continued, "whom I brought back with me from abroad; well set up, you see, and a charming figure. Come my handsome innocent, lift up your great black eyes, and kiss Madame's hand I beg you."

"Monsieur le Commander, leave my room, I order you, or I will call——"

"Call whom, pray? Your servants? I whipped your rascal of a lackey, I tell you, and it's a question whether he's in condition now to hold a torch steady to light me. What, is this the way you receive an old friend? Take a seat, Chevalier."

He walked up to Mademoiselle de Guerchi, and in spite of her resistance seized one of her hands and forced her to sit down, seating himself beside her.

"There, my child," he said, "now let us talk sensibly.

I understand that before a stranger you feel called upon to appear shocked by my manner of acting. But he knows it all, and is surprised at nothing that he sees or hears. So let's have no prudery. I reached Paris yesterday and not till to-day did I discover your hiding place. I don't ask you what has taken place during my absence. God and you alone know, and He will tell me nothing, and you will lie to me; so it's as well not to force you to commit that little sin. But here I am, joyous as of yore, more in love than ever, and inclined to resume my former privileges."

The young woman, dazed by his blustering entrance, and his bullying exordium, and realizing that an assumption of dignity would have no other effect than to draw out some fresh impertinence from him, pretended to become resigned to her position.

Meanwhile Master Quennebert was scrutinizing the Chevalier de Morauges, who was sitting with his face toward the partition. His fashionably cut costume set off all the charms of his person. His glossy black hair was in striking contrast to the pallor of his complexion. His great eyes, veiled by long, silky lashes, had a penetrating glance, and their expression was a curious mixture of audacity and weakness. His lips were thin, slightly pale, and often curled in an ironical smile. His hands were exquisite, his feet almost as small as a baby's, and he showed with a sort of self-satisfied affection a beautifully modelled leg, which was left exposed to view by ample half-boots falling in folds over the ankles, and trimmed with rich lace of the latest style.

The chevalier seemed to be no more than eighteen years old, and nature had denied his charming face the distinctive mark of his sex. No down as yet shaded his chin; only the slightest dark line could be distinguished

on his upper lip. With his somewhat effeminate beauty, his graceful figure, his glance, at one moment tender and caressing, and the next as bold as a page's, he was a perfect model of an adorable scapegrace, destined to arouse sudden passions and strange fancies. While his pretended uncle was coolly making himself at home, Quennebert noticed that the chevalier was already beginning to flirt with the hostess, and dart tender and languishing glances in her direction on the sly. This manœuvre increased his interest tenfold.

"My child," said the commander, "since I last saw you, I have inherited a fortune of a hundred thousand francs, neither more nor less. An aunt of mine thought best to depart this life; and as she was of a crotchety and malicious disposition, she made me her sole heir, in order to make the relatives who had taken care of her storm and rage after her death. A hundred thousand francs! that is a good round sum, and will enable us to cut a wide swath and make a pretty display for two years. Together we will eat up the capital with the income, if you choose. You don't answer. Can it be that your heart is given to another? Ah! I should be very sorry—for the happy mortal that you smile upon, for I will not brook a rival, I warn you."

"Monsieur le Commandeur," retorted Angélique, "when you speak so to me, you forget that I have given you no right to direct my actions."

"Did we have any rupture?"

At this strange question, she started in surprise.

"Did we not part the last time on good terms?" continued De Jars. "I am well aware that for some months you have not seen me; but I offer you an explanation of my absence on legitimate grounds, and it is customary to wait at least long enough to weep for the dead before

replacing them. You admit, do you not, that I have a successor?"

Mademoiselle de Guerchi had thus far with great difficulty restrained herself, and forced herself to drink the bitter cup to the dregs, but she could endure the humiliation no longer. After casting a look of entreaty at the young chevalier, who was still ogling her, she adopted the course of bursting into tears. In a voice broken with sobs she said that she was very unhappy at being treated thus, that she did not deserve it, and that heaven was punishing her for the sin she had committed in yielding to the commander's passion. One would have sworn that she was speaking sincerely and from the bottom of her heart. If Master Quennebert had not been a witness of the preceding scene, if he had not known what the real fact was as to the young woman's moral character, he would perhaps have been affected by her heartrending lamentations.

The chevalier seemed deeply moved by Angélique's suffering, and while his uncle was striding up and down the room, cursing like a heathen, he moved gradually nearer to her, and manifested by expressive gestures his compassionate interest in her situation.

The notary was in a strangely perplexed state of mind; he was uncertain whether all that he had seen was a concerted scheme between De Jars and Jeannin, but there was one thing of which he was perfectly sure, and that was that the sympathy of the Chevalier de Morauges, as displayed by his sighs and passionate glances, was the merest hypocrisy. If he had been alone, he would not have been able, whatever might be the result, to resist his impulse to rush head first into the embroglio, certain of putting an entirely new and unforeseen aspect upon it, and of producing by his appearance the terrible effect

of a Medusa's head. But the presence of the widow Rapally restrained him; he might ruin all his future hopes, and pollute the golden spring, which was bubbling up before his eyes, just for the pleasure of producing a superb *coup de theâtre.* Prudence and self-interest kept him in the wings.

The young woman's tears and the chevalier's grimaces did not bring the commander to repentance; on the contrary his spleen vented itself in even more vehement language. He stamped his spurred heels upon the rickety floor, pulled his plumed hat down over his eyes, and imitated all the blustering attitudes of the bullies of Spanish comedy. Suddenly he seemed to adopt a serious resolution; his face changed its expression, which became cold rather than angry, and he walked up to Angélique and said to her with a calm bearing which was even more ominous than his wrath:

"My rival's name?"

"You shall not know it," she said.

"His name, Madame!"

"Never! your insults are beyond endurance. I am not accountable to you."

"Ah! I will find it out in spite of you, and I know who will tell me! Do you imagine that you can make sport of me and my love in this way? No, no! I thought you faithful formerly, and closed my ears to the rumors which I treated as base slanders. People knew of my mad passion for you, and I made myself the butt and laughing-stock of the whole city. But you give me back my sight; yes, my eyes are opened now, and I see whom my vengeance should seek out and strike down. There is a man whom I once called my friend, I could not bear to believe that he was treacherous; I was warned of it, but refused to listen to the warning. But

I will seek that man out, and will say to him: 'You have stolen from me the treasure which belonged to me, and you are a scoundrel! I will have your life, or you shall have mine;' and if there is justice in heaven I shall kill him. Ah! Madame, you don't ask me the man's name! you well know whom I mean!"

This threatening speech showed Mademoiselle de Guerchi the imminent danger of her position. At first she thought that the commander's visit might be a mere snare to test her; but the vulgarity of his speech, and his cynical propositions, all in the presence of a third person, changed her mind in that respect. No man could ever have dreamed that success would attend such revolting methods of seduction, and if he had desired to convict her of perfidy, he surely would have come alone, and would have employed more persuasive weapons. He believed that he still possessed rights, and he claimed them in a way to lose them. But as soon as he threatened to seek a quarrel with a rival whose identity he indicated clearly enough, and to reveal to him a secret which she was so deeply interested in concealing, the poor girl lost her head completely. She gazed at De Jars in a frightened way, and her voice trembled as she said:

"I don't know whom you mean."

"You don't know? To-morrow I will send Jeannin de Castille here to tell you, an hour before our duel."

"Oh! no, no, you won't do that," she cried, clasping her hands.

"Adieu, Madame."

"You shall not go away thus; I will not let you go until I have your promise."

She seized his cloak with both hands, and then turned to the Chevalier de Morauges.

"You are young, Monsieur, and I have done nothing to offend you; take my part! have pity on me, and help me to move him."

"Uncle," said the chevalier, in a tone of entreaty, "be generous, and don't drive a woman to despair."

"Your prayers are useless!" rejoined the commander.

"What do you wish me to do?" queried Angélique; "to condemn myself to the cloister as a punishment? I am ready. Shall I promise never to see him again? *Mon Dieu!* give me time; postpone your revenge for a single day. To-morrow evening I swear, you will have nothing further to fear. I thought that you had forgotten me, deserted me; and how could I think otherwise? To go away without telling me, and stay away without letting me hear from you! Who told you that I did not weep at your desertion? that, here in this solitude, where my days were consumed by *ennui*, I did not seek to ascertain what it was that kept you from me, and why I saw you no more? You had left Paris, you say; did I know it? did you inform me? Ah! if you love me, promise not to fight this duel; promise me that you will not seek that man to-morrow!"

The damsel expected to accomplish wonders by this eloquent appeal, interspersed with tears and pathetic glances. When she requested a reprieve for twenty-four hours, and swore that at the expiration of that time Jeannin should be definitively dismissed, the commander and the chevalier bit their lips to keep from laughing outright. The former recovered his self-possession, while Angélique, still on her knees, was pressing his hands. He compelled her to raise her head, and looked her sternly in the eye, as he said:

"To-morrow, Madame, if not this evening, I shall tell him all, and we will fight to the death."

He pushed her away and strode to the door.

"Villain!" cried Angélique.

She essayed to rise and rush after him, but, whether her emotion was unfeigned, or she concluded to try a swoon as a last expedient, she uttered a heartrending shriek, and the chevalier had no choice but to catch her in his arms.

De Jars when he saw his nephew thus encumbered, laughed like a madman, and hurried from the room. Two minutes later he re-entered the wine-shop on Rue Saint-André-des-Arts.

"How's this? alone?" said Jeannin.

"Alone."

"What have you done with the chevalier?"

"I left him tête-a-tête with the lady, who was panting, choking, swooning. Ha! ha! ha! She fell senseless in his arms. Ha! ha! ha!"

"The little rascal is quite capable of cutting me out, in her present unfortunate position."

"Do you think so? Ha! ha! ha!"

And De Jars laughed so heartily and uproariously that his worthy friend caught the contagion, and was bursting.

During the first moment of silence which followed the commander's departure, Master Quennebert again heard the widow Rapally chuckling at the other end of the room, but was less inclined than ever to give his attention to her.

"*Pardieu!*" he said to himself, "this is a scene which promises to be even more interesting than the others. I don't believe that a man ever found himself in a situation like mine, My hand itches like the devil, and in spite of the curiosity which keeps me nailed to this spot, I have a most intense longing to box this Chevalier de Morauges' ears! Ah! if I only could have a proof of

all this! But I must listen, for the hussy is opening her eyes."

As he said, Angélique was beginning to cast terrified glances around the room; several times she passed her hand across her forehead, as if to collect her confused thoughts.

"He has gone!" she cried; "Oh! why didn't you keep him? You must needs abandon me and take his part."

"Calm yourself," rejoined the chevalier, "be calm, in heaven's name! I will see my uncle and induce him not to ruin you. Don't weep so, your tears rend my heart. Oh! *Mon Dieu!* how cruel he must be to make you suffer so! I should never have the heart to do it; I could not see you weep, without feeling disarmed, and all my wrath, even though it were justified, would vanish before a single look from your eyes."

"Noble youth!" said Angélique.

"Idiot!" muttered Master Quennebert, "Oh! yes, let yourself be fooled by his honeyed words. How the devil will all this end? Satan himself could never have invented such an intrigue as this!"

"Before believing you guilty," continued the chevalier, "I would require proofs, overwhelming proofs! and yet who knows what trouble and uncertainty a word from you might sow in my mind? Ah! yes; though the whole world should accuse you and bear witness against you, I would put my trust in you, and in you alone. I am young, Madame—I have never loved:—I did not know until a moment ago, how a sudden thought can take possession of the heart and turn it topsy-turvy in less time than one's eyes need to look and admire, how features which one may never see again leave their image engraved thereon for life! and yet, if a woman whom I

knew not, had come to me, crying: 'I implore your assistance, save me, protect me!' I would have put my arm and my sword at her service, I would have laid down my life for her without hesitation. Do you, Madame, who are so beautiful, you, for whom I would gladly die, tell me what you require of me; what you wish me to do."

"Prevent this duel, this interview between your uncle and the man he named! But answer me this; you cannot lie."

"Oh! yes, rely on that, simpleton that you are," muttered Master Quennebert in his corner; "you are a mere child at this game, beside the chevalier. If you only knew whom you are dealing with!"

"At your age," continued Angélique, "men do not know how to disguise their thoughts, their hearts are not corrupt, and they are capable of pity. A frightful idea has come into my head, a horrible suspicion! I fancy that I have discovered an infernal trick, a trap that they are trying to lure me into as a joke. Tell me, isn't this all a game? A poor woman is so helpless against treachery—men amuse themselves by stirring up her heart and her mind, they humor her vanity, they surround her with homage and flattery and allurements, and after they have made sport of her to their heart's content, they mock at her, and insult her. Are they acting in concert? is this love and this jealousy all a fraud?"

"Oh! Madame," replied the chevalier, with a most indignant expression, "can you imagine such perversity in a man's heart? I do not know the man whom the commander accused you of preferring to him, but, whoever he may be, I believe him to be worthy of your love; he would never have given his consent to such a

dastardly performance. The commander, too, is incapable of it. Jealousy leads him astray, and drives him mad. But I am not dependent upon him, Madame; I am my own master and do as I please. I will prevent this duel, I will leave the man who loves you, and whom alas! I can see that you love, the illusion in which his happiness consists. You will be happy with him, and I—I will never see you again. I shall have but the memory, Madame, and the undying joy of having been of some service to you."

Angélique raised her fine eyes to the chevalier's face, and thanked him with a long, expressive look more eloquently than any words could have done.

"My God forgive me," thought Master Quennebert, "if the wench isn't making eyes at him already! Indeed, when one is drowning, one catches at straws."

"I understand you, Madame," the chevalier resumed; "I understand your unspoken language; you thank me for him; you beg me to leave you—yes, Madame, yes, I obey, I will go; though I risk my life in doing it, I will prevent this meeting. I will choke back this fatal disclosure. But one last entreaty. May I be permitted to see you once more, only once, before leaving this city, whither I ought never to have come? I shall go hence in a few days—to-morrow—as soon as I know that you are happy; but do not refuse me what I ask—that I may once more see your eyes look into mine—then I will go. I will fly forever! But if I do not succeed—and I pledge my honor to do my utmost—but if the commander's jealousy makes him insensible to my entreaties and my tears, if the man you love comes and overwhelms you with reproaches, if he too abandons you, will you drive me from your presence, if I venture then to say to you: 'I love you?' Tell me, oh! tell me!"

"Go," she said, "and earn my gratitude or my love."

The chevalier seized one of her hands and covered it with burning kisses.

"Such imprudence passes all understanding," muttered Quennebert; "luckily the play is over for the evening, otherwise I should certainly make a fool of myself. *Pardieu!* the young woman hardly suspects what the *dénouement* of the comedy will be."

Nor did he know much better. It was truly an evening of adventures. It was written that in the space of two hours Angélique should experience all the emotions, all the vicissitudes to which her manner of life exposed her—hope, fear, happiness, humiliation, falsehood, burlesque affection, a labyrinth of intrigue, and, to cap the climax, a catastrophe, that was not on the bills.

The chevalier was still holding Angélique's hand, when the sound of voices and footsteps was again heard in the corridor.

"Can it be that he has come back?" cried the damsel, hurriedly extricating herself from the passionate embrace of the chevalier. "It isn't possible! *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* it's his voice!"

The color left her cheeks and she stood staring at the door, with her hands extended, and without sufficient strength to take a step forward or back.

The chevalier listened, trying in vain to recognize either the commander's voice or the treasurer's.

"His voice!" muttered Master Quennebert; "is a fourth gallant going to turn up, I wonder."

The sound came nearer and nearer.

"Get out of sight," said Angélique, pointing to a door leading to another room, opposite the tapestry behind which the widow and the notary were ensconced;

LA CONSTANTINE

The Duc de Vitry finds the Chevalier de Moranges in the room of his inamorata, Angélique-Louise de Guerchi.

"conceal yourself there—there's a secret staircase—you can go out that way."

"I conceal myself!" rejoined Morauges, with a swaggering air; "never! I will remain where I am."

It was good advice to have followed, however, and two seconds later the chevalier might well repent *in petto*, that he had not followed it, for a tall, muscular young man burst into the room in a state of intense excitement. Angélique rushed to meet him, crying:

"Ah! Monsieur le Duc, is it you?"

"What is this I hear, Angélique?" said the Duc de Vitry. "I was told below that three men had called upon you this evening. Only two of them have gone out—where is the third? Aha! I shall not have to go far to find him," he added, as his eye fell upon the chevalier, who showed as bold a front as possible.

"In heaven's name!" cried the young woman; "in heaven's name, listen to me!"

"No, no, not a word! I'm not questioning you now. Who are you, Monsieur?"

The chevalier's mischievous, bantering disposition was even yet more powerful than his sense of the risk he was running. He retorted defiantly: "Whatever it pleases me to be, Monsieur; and, 'pon honor, it amuses me to have you ask me the question in that tone."

The duke foamed with rage, and put his hand to his sword. Angélique tried to restrain him.

"You want to help him escape my vengeance, traitress," he exclaimed, falling back a few steps, so as to block the doorway. "Defend your life, Monsieur!"

"And you yours!"

They drew their swords at the same moment.

A double shriek rang out in the room and behind the partition. Both Angélique and the widow Rapally were

unable to restrain their alarm when they saw the naked swords glisten. The widow was so terrified that she fell heavily to the floor and fainted.

This incident probably saved the life of the chevalier, whose blood was beginning to run cold in his veins at the sight of his adversary, white with rage, and in possession of the only means of egress.

"What does this mean?" said the duke, "are there invisible enemies here?"

Forgetting that he thereby left the door unguarded he rushed in the direction of the shriek, and sounded the partition with the point of his sword. Thereupon the chevalier abruptly abandoned his blustering attitude, and leaped from one end of the room to the other like a cat chased by a dog. But he could not escape so quickly that the duke had not time to catch sight of him, and dart in pursuit, both of them taking great risks of breaking their necks in the dark rooms and stairways.

All this took in a second or two, like a flash of lightning. The outer door opened and closed twice with a great crash. The two foes were in the street, one flying from the other.

"*Bon Dieu!* what a succession of nightmares!" said Mademoiselle de Guerchi. "It's enough to make one die of fright! What's going to happen now, and what shall I say to the duke if he comes back?"

There was a strange cracking sound in the room. Angélique paused, terror stricken anew, and mindful of the shriek she had heard. Her hair, which was already somewhat dishevelled, broke its last bonds, and stood erect, when she saw the figures on the tapestry move and wave about like living beings, and lean over toward her. She fell on her knees, and closed her eyes, praying to God and all the saints in Paradise to come to her

assistance. A strong hand seized her, and forced her to rise, and a strange man, coming up through the floor or from behind the walls, dragged her, no more than half alive, into the adjoining room, taking with him the only light which was not extinguished in the fracas.

This man, as the reader has already guessed, was Master Quennebert. As soon as the duke and the chevalier disappeared, he ran over to the widow's corner, and assured himself that she was unconscious, and in no condition to see or hear anything, so that he could tell her whatever he chose the next day. He then returned to his former post and pushed with all his strength against the tapestry, so that the nails that held it to the rotting planks were pulled out, and he made a large opening. He devoted himself so zealously to demolishing the partition, and was so completely engrossed by the powerful motive which impelled him, that he entirely forgot the bag of twelve hundred livres given him by the widow.

"Who are you? what do you want of me?" cried Mademoiselle de Guerchi, struggling to free herself.

"Silence!" retorted Quennebert.

"Do not kill me! in mercy's name!"

"Who thinks of killing you? But hold your tongue; I don't choose that your shrieks shall attract people here. I must be alone with you a few moments. Once more, I tell you to be quiet! Don't force me to use violence; obey me, and no harm will be done you."

"But, Monsieur, who are you?"

"Neither a thief, nor an assassin; that's all you need to know, the rest doesn't concern you. You have pen and paper here?"

"Yes, Monsieur, here they are."

"Good. Sit down at this table."

"What for?"

"Sit down and answer my questions. The first man who came here this evening was Messire Jeannin?"

"Messire Jeannin de Castille."

"Treasurer of the bank."

"Yes."

"Good. The second was Commander De Jars; the young man with him his nephew, the Chevalier de Morauges. The latest comer was a duke, I believe?"

"The Duc de Vitry."

"Now write as I dictate."

He spoke slowly and Mademoiselle de Guerchi took the pen, and prepared to do as he bade her.

"'On this day,'" said Quennebert, "'on this day November 20, 1658, I, —— your name?"

"Angélique-Louise de Guerchi."

"Write: 'I, Angélique-Louise de Guerchi, received in the apartments occupied by me in the former palace of the Duchesse d'Étampes, at the corner of Rue Gît-le-Cœur and Rue du Hurepoix, a visit in the first place from Messire Jeannin de Castille, treasurer of the bank, about half-past seven in the evening; secondly, a visit from Commander de Jars, who was accompanied by a young man, his nephew, whom he called the Chevalier de Morauges; thirdly, after the departure of Commander de Jars, and while I was alone with said Chevalier de Morauges, I received a visit from the Duc de Vitry, who drew his sword upon the chevalier, and forced him to take flight.'

"Now put in a line by itself, and in large letters:

"'Description of the Chevalier Morauges.'"

"But I only saw him an instant," said Angélique, "and I can't recall ——."

"Write on. I can remember perfectly, and that is all that is necessary.

"'Height about five feet.' The chevalier," said Quennebert, interrupting himself, "is four feet, eleven inches three lines and a half, but I don't need to be absolutely exact."

Angélique looked at him in utter stupefaction.

"Do you know him, pray?" she asked.

"I saw him this evening for the first time; but my eye is very accurate.

"'Height about five feet, black hair, black eyes, aquiline nose, large mouth, high forehead, oval face, pale, no beard.'

"Now on another line, in large letters:

"'SPECIAL MARKS.'

"'A small dark spot on the neck, behind the right ear; another smaller one on the left hand.'

"Have you written it all? now write your full name at the bottom."

"What do you expect to do with this paper?"

"The reason I didn't tell you in the first place was that I don't wish you to know; and so any questions in that direction will be a mere waste of breath. However," he added, folding the paper, and putting it away in one of the pockets of his doublet, "I do not enjoin secrecy upon you. You are quite free to tell any one you please that you wrote a description of the Chevalier de Morauges at the dictation of a stranger, who entered your room you don't know how, through the roof, or down the chimney, as you choose, but who concluded to go out by a more convenient road. Is there not a secret staircase? Show me where it is. I don't care to meet anyone on my way."

Angélique showed him a door hidden behind a damask curtain. Quennebert saluted her and took his departure, leaving her firmly convinced that she had seen the devil. Not until the next day did an inspection of the tapestried partition enable her to account for the supernatural apparition; but the terror and dread inspired by the mystery surrounding her visitor were so great, that, despite the permission to tell of the adventure, she mentioned it to no one, and did not even complain to her neighbor, the widow Rapally, of the inquisitiveness which had led her to spy upon her actions.

We left De Jars and Jeannin laughing over the success of their practical joke at the wine-shop on Rue Saint-André-des-Arts.

"Do you mean to say," said the treasurer, "that you really believe Angélique took my proposal seriously? God bless me! Does she think that I mean to marry her?"

"My word for it. If it weren't so, would she have been in such a frenzy? Would she have fainted when I threatened to tell you that I had a claim upon her as well as you. To get married! why that's the passion of all creatures of her sort, and there isn't one of them who understands why a man of honor should blush to give her his name. If you could have seen her fright and tears! They were enough to break one's heart, or to make one burst with laughter."

"Well," said Jeannin, "its getting late. Shall we wait for the chevalier?"

"Let us go and join him there."

"We might as well; perhaps he has forgotten to come away. We will make a terrible scene, cry treachery and perfidy, and give your nephew a drubbing. Pay the score, and let's be off."

They left the wine-shop, both considerably heated by the wine they had drunk in large quantities. They felt the need of a breath of fresh air, and instead of going down Rue Pavée, they determined to follow Rue Saint-André-des-Arts as far as Pont Saint-Michel, and reach the old palace in a roundabout way.

At the moment that De Jars suggested leaving the wine-shop, the chevalier was putting his best foot foremost. It was not that he was entirely lacking in courage; if it had been impossible to avoid his adversary, perhaps he would have recovered the audacity which led him to draw his sword in the first place; but he was a novice in the profession of arms, besides being physically weak, and the game seemed too unequal for him to take part, unless he was fairly driven to it.

When he left the house he ran down Rue Gît-le-Cœur and hearing the door open and close again, plunged into the narrow and winding Rue Hirondelle, hoping to throw Vitry off the scent; but he, after a moment's uncertainty, followed the sound of footsteps. The chevalier, seeking still to lead him astray, turned to the right, and returned up Rue Saint-André as far as the church, which then stood where the square is to-day. He expected to find a hiding-place there, for the church was being enlarged, and stones were piled all around the old edifice. He crept in among them; twice he heard Vitry pass close to him, and twice he prepared to receive a violent onslaught. This marching and counter-marching lasted some moments. He began to hope that the danger was past, and was waiting for the moon, which had just broken through the clouds, to be obscured again, to steal away by one of the neighboring streets. Suddenly a shadow rose in front of him, and a threatening voice cried:

"Ah! here you are at last, coward!"

Danger aroused a factitious spirit of resistance, a sort of feverish courage, in the chevalier, and his sword met his pursuer's. It was a singular combat, filled with vicissitudes and uncertainties. Skill in the science of fencing was of little avail on a ground where both combatants stumbled at every step, and constantly collided with immovable masses, sometimes in the light and sometimes in the shadow. Steel clashed against steel, the feet of the adversaries touched each other, several times the sword of one pierced the other's cloak, several times the word, "Death! death!" rang out on the air. But again and again, as lithe and agile and quick as ever, the one who seemed to have been struck sprang to his feet again unwounded, and forced the fighting in his turn. There was no truce, no breathing-space, no clever feints, no fencer's tricks; death was to be dealt or suffered entirely at hazard. Blows were wasted in the air, the swords struck sparks above their heads, and gleamed at the same moment at the breast, turned aside as they were about to strike, sought each other in space, and crossed once more. At last, as one of the two aimed a straight thrust, he felt a sharp point tear his chest. He uttered a loud cry, recoiled two or three steps, and, exhausted by his last effort, fell over upon a large stone, and lay there with his arms extended as if he were on a cross.

The other fled.

"Listen, De Jars," said Jeannin, "there's fighting going on hereabout; I hear the clash of swords."

They both stopped and listened intently.

"I can hear nothing now."

"Hark, there it is again! It's in the direction of the church."

"What a frightful yell!"

They ran at full speed toward the square; it was dark, quiet, deserted. They looked in every direction.

"I can't see a living soul," said Jeannin, "and I'm much afraid that the poor devil who emitted that shriek has mumbled his last prayer."

"I don't know why I tremble so," rejoined De Jars. "That heart-rending cry sent a shiver through me from head to foot. Didn't you think that it sounded like the chevalier's voice?"

"The chevalier is with La Guerchi, and even if he had left her he wouldn't have crossed this square on his way to join us. Let us go our way, and peace to the dead man."

"Look, Jeannin; what's that in front of us!"

"On that stone? A man!"

"Yes, and bathed in his own blood," cried De Jars, who had already darted toward him. "Ah! it's he! its he! Look, his eyes are closed, his hands closed. My dear child! He doesn't hear me. Oh! who has murdered him, in God's name?"

He fell on his knees, threw himself on the body, and gave every indication of the most acute despair.

"Come, come," said Jeannin, amazed at such an explosion of grief on the part of a man accustomed to duels, and who had omitted to exhibit such extreme sensitiveness on many similar occasions; "come, be a man, and don't act so like a woman. Perhaps the wound is not mortal. Let us begin by stanching the blood and calling for help."

"No, no——"

"You are mad!"

"Don't call, in heaven's name! The wound is near the heart. Your handkerchief, Jeannin, to check the flow of blood. Now, help me to raise him."

"Zounds, am I awake, or am I the plaything of a dream?" said Jeannin as he put his hand upon the chevalier; "its a——"

"Hold your peace, as you value your head! you shall know all, but be silent! There is some one looking at us."

There was, indeed, a man standing a few feet away, wrapped in a cloak, and perfectly motionless.

"What are you doing there?" said De Jars.

"And you, Messeigneurs?" rejoined Master Quennebert in a tranquil and confident voice.

"Your curiosity may cost you dear, Monsieur; we are not in the habit of allowing our actions to be watched."

"And I, my noble sirs, am not in the habit of taking a step until I am sure of my ground. You are two against one," he added, throwing back his cloak, and tapping the hilts of a pair of pistols thrust in his belt, "but here is something that equalizes matters. You are mistaken as to my intention. I have no wish to watch you; chance alone brought me here, and you will agree yourselves, I am sure, that your attitude in this deserted spot at this hour of the night, is sufficiently strange to attract the attention of a man who is as little inclined to seek a quarrel as to allow himself to be frightened by threats."

"It was chance, too," said De Jars, "that brought us to this place. We were crossing the square, my friend and I, when we heard groans; we drew near and found this young gallant, who is a stranger to us, floored by a sword-thrust."

Master Quennebert stooped over the wounded man when the moon came out for an instant; he looked closely at him, and said:

"I don't know him, either. If we were surprised in this situation, we might easily be taken for three malefactors, holding a consultation over their victim's body. What do you propose to do?"

"Take him to a doctor. It would be inhuman to leave him here, and even now we are wasting precious time in talk."

"Do you belong in the neighborhood?"

"No," said the treasurer.

"Nor do I," said Quennebert, "but I think I have heard of a surgeon who lives near by on Rue Hautefeuille."

"I know one," interposed De Jars, hastily, "a very skillful man."

"Command me."

"Gladly, Monsieur, for it is a considerable distance."

"I am at your service."

De Jars and Jeannin raised the chevalier, and took him by the shoulders; Master Quennebert took his legs, and thus laden they set out. They walked slowly, looking anxiously about, a precaution which was the more necessary in that the sky had almost wholly cleared; they glided along in the shadow of the houses which stood on both sides of Pont Saint-Michel, reached the narrow streets of the Cité, and after many detours to avoid meeting chance passers-by they stopped at the door of a house behind the Hotel de Ville.

"Thanks, Monsieur," said De Jars, "thanks; we have no further need of your assistance."

As he spoke, Master Quennebert suddenly dropped the chevalier's feet upon the pavement, while the commander and treasurer still supported his body; he stepped back a pace or two, drew his pistols from his belt, and said, with his finger on the trigger:

"Do not stir Messieurs, or you are dead men."

Both of them, although embarrassed by their burden, instinctively put their hands to their swords.

"Not a movement, not a word, or I kill you."

The argument was unanswerable, and very convincing even for two duellists. The bravest man turns pale at the appearance of death, unforeseen, imminent, and the man who threatened them seemed like one who was determined to put his threat into execution without hesitation; they must needs obey or be nailed to the wall with a pistol-ball.

"Pray what do you want, Monsieur?" demanded Jeannin.

Quennebert retorted, without changing his attitude:

"Commander de Jars, and you, Messire Jeannin de Castille, treasurer,—You see, gentle sirs, that beside the advantage of weapons which strike swiftly and surely, I, whom you do not know, have the further advantage of knowing who you are—you will carry the wounded man into this house, whither I do not propose to follow you; it is unnecessary for me to do that, but when you come out you will find me at this door. After you have handed him over to the doctor, you will procure paper, and write—note what I say—that on November 20, 1658, about midnight, you carried to this house—which you will describe,—with the aid of an unknown man, a youth whom you call the Chevalier de Morauges, and whom you pass off as your nephew—"

"As he really is."

"Very well."

"But who told you—"

"Let me go on: who had been wounded in a fight with swords on the same night, behind the Church of Saint-André-des-Arts, by the Duc de Vitry—"

LA CONSTANTINE

Commander de Jars and Treasurer Jeannin trapped by Quennebert.

MARIE LEBRON
FEMME CONSTANTIN
MATRONE JURÉE
CLAUDE
PERRELLO
CHIRURGIEN

"The Duc de Vitry! How do you know?"

"I do know, and it matters little how I know. After that statement you will add that the said Chevalier de Morauges is no other than Joséphine-Charlotte Boullenois, whom you, commander, abducted some four months since from the convent of La Raquette, whom you have made your mistress, and whom you are keeping out of sight by disguising her in male attire; then you will sign. Am I well informed?"

De Jars and Jeannin were absolutely speechless with surprise for some seconds. The former at last faltered:

"Will you tell us who you are, Monsieur?"

"The devil in person, if you choose. Well, will you do as I wish? Assuming that I am not skillful enough to kill you at two paces, will you force me to ask you in broad daylight and aloud, what I now ask you at midnight in a whisper? And don't imagine that you can elude me by making a false declaration, which I could not easily read by the light of the moon; don't think, either, that you can take me by surprise as you hand it to me; you will approach with your swords sheathed as now. If this condition is not complied with, I fire, and the noise will attract a crowd. To-morrow I shall say something different from what I say to-day; I shall proclaim the truth at the street corners, in the public squares, and under the windows of the Louvre. To yield thus to threats is hard, I know, for men of spirit; but consider that you are in my power, and that there is no shame in purchasing your life when you can't defend it. What is your reply?"

In spite of his natural courage, Jeannin, who found himself in peril of being compromised in an affair in which he had nothing to gain, and who was in nowise

anxious to be looked upon as an accessory to an abduction, whispered to the commander:

"Faith! I think our wisest course is to yield."

De Jars wished to make sure before replying that there was no way of eluding the watchfulness of his enemy, and taking him unawares; his hand still rested on his sword hilt, without moving, but all ready to draw.

"There's some one coming over yonder! do you hear?" he exclaimed.

"Bah! a *ruse de guerre*," replied Quennebert; "if there was really a noise I wouldn't turn my head, and if your sword moves in the scabbard you're a dead man!"

"Hold," said De Jars, "I surrender at discretion, but on my friend's account and this woman's, Monsieur, not on my own. However, we are entitled to some pledge that you will keep silent; shall you not use this written testimony that you exact, to ruin us to-morrow?"

"I don't know yet what use I shall make of it. Come, Messieurs, make up your minds, or you will have nothing but a dead body to take to the doctor; you have no way of escaping it."

For the first time the wounded man groaned feebly.

"I must save her," cried De Jars; "I will obey!"

"And I swear upon my honor that I will not try to get this woman out of your hands, and that I will not interfere with your conquest. Knock, Messieurs, and remain as long as you deem it necessary; I am patient. Do you pray God that she may recover; for my part I hope that she will die."

They entered the house, and Quennebert, wrapping his cloak around him once more, walked up and down the street, stopping to listen from time to time. After

about two hours the commander and the treasurer came out. They handed him a written paper as agreed.

"I greatly fear," said De Jars, "that it will prove to be a certificate of death."

"Heaven grant it, commander! Adieu, messieurs."

He withdrew, walking backward, pistol in hand, and ready to act upon the offensive, until he was far enough from them to have no fear of an attack.

The two gentlemen walked rapidly away, turning to look back now and then, deeply humiliated at having been compelled to submit to the dictation of a clown, and anxious, especially De Jars, concerning the wounded girl's condition.

On the day following these extraordinary occurrences, explanations were in order between the various personages who were involved therein, either as actors or as spectators. When Master Quennebert reached his friend's house, where he was to pass the night, he awoke to the fact that his deep interest in the adventures of the Chevalier de Morauges had entirely driven from his mind the bag of twelve hundred livres, which he owed to the widow's generosity. The money was necessary to him, so he returned to her abode.

She had hardly recovered from her terrible fright. Her swoon lasted far beyond the time when the notary left the house, and Angélique, not daring to return to the bewitched room, sought shelter from any further apparitions in the most remote corner of her suite.

When Madame Rapally recovered her senses she called in a weak, trembling voice; but no one answered, so she groped her way in the darkness out of the room. Alarmed to find that she was alone, she buried herself under the bed-clothes, and all the rest of the night she dreamed of naked swords, duels and murder. When

daylight appeared, she ventured into the mysterious room once more, without calling her servants, and found the bag that had contained the crowns lying open on the floor, and the money scattered on all sides, the partition broken, and the tapestry torn and hanging in shreds. The widow was very near fainting again; she fancied that she saw blood-stains everywhere, but a more careful inspection reassured her somewhat. She picked up the scattered crowns, and was agreeably surprised to find that not one failed to answer her call. But how and why did Master Quennebert happen to leave them behind? What had become of him? She was lost in a maze of absurd, extravagant conjectures, when the notary made his appearance. He discovered from the first words she uttered, that she was absolutely in ignorance of what had happened, so he explained to her that at the interesting moment when Mademoiselle de Guerchi's tête-à-tête with the chevalier was so unceremoniously broken in upon by the duke, he was so absorbed in watching them, that he did not notice that the tapestry and the partition were giving way under the weight of his body; that when the duke drew his sword he, Quennebert, suddenly losing his support, fell almost head foremost into the room, amid a chaos of overturned furniture and lamps; that he hardly had time to rise and draw his sword hurriedly, and that he made his exit fencing with the duke and chevalier both; that they pursued him hotly, and that he found himself at a late hour of the night too far away to return. Quennebert added profuse protestations of affection, devotion and gratitude, and went away with his twelve hundred livres, leaving her content so far as he was concerned, but unable to shake off the effects of her fright. The partition was repaired the same day.

While the notary was soothing the widow, Angélique was exhausting all the expedients suggested by her experience in her trade to banish the suspicions of the Duc de Vitry. She averred that she was the victim of an unforeseen attack, which she in no way authorized. The young Chevalier de Morauges had gained access to her upon the pretext that he was the bearer of news of the duke, the only man who filled her thoughts, and whom she loved. He claimed to have seen him some days before; by cleverly managed reticence he had caused her to fear that the duke had forgotten her, and that his absence was due to his pursuit of a new flame. She said that she repelled the insinuation with scorn, although his long absence was a legitimate ground for most painful conjectures, most heartrending doubts. At last the chevalier, growing gradually bolder, avowed his own love for her, whereat she rose and ordered him to leave her. When the duke came in he took her embarrassment and her excitement, which were most natural under such circumstances, for proofs of her guilt.

It was necessary for her also to explain the presence of the other two men who were denounced to Vitry. As he had no information concerning them, and as her servant knew neither Jeannin nor De Jars, she said that two gentlemen did in fact call upon her that evening; that they refused to give their names, but asked her for news of the duke, and that she suspected them of being in league with the chevalier to ruin her, and perhaps to help him carry her off, but that she knew nothing positive concerning them, nothing to throw any definite light upon their projects.

Contrary to his wont the duke was not easily won over by these wretched reasons. Unfortunately for him, however, the damsel was able to intrench herself

in a strong position. It was her duty, she said, to listen in the first place, with the confidence which love inspires, to persons who talked to her of the man whom she cherished. From this lie to bitter reproaches because he had not more consideration for her mortal anxiety, was but a step; instead of defending herself, she complained, she accused; she even had the appearance of believing that the chevalier's statements might be based in fact, so that the duke, although he was not guilty of the slightest infidelity, and had excellent reasons to give in justification of his silence, was soon reduced from making threats to losing himself in a maze of apologies, and humbly imploring her forgiveness. As for the shriek he heard, and which she supposed to have proceeded from the stranger who made the incursion into her room after their departure, she persuaded him that his ears deceived him. The most important point for her, however, was to divert him from investigating, and to efface all traces of the affair as completely as possible. The result of their conference was that the Duc de Vitry was more in love and more credulous than before, and that, believing that he was called upon to make up for the wrong he had done her, he surrendered at discretion, bound hand and foot. Two days later he installed his mistress in other quarters.

The widow Rapally, too, was determined to change her abode, and she removed to a house that belonged to her on Pont Saint-Michel.

The commander was keenly affected by the condition of Charlotte Boullenois. The physician in whose hands he had placed her, after examining her wounds, would not answer for her recovery. It was not that De Jars was capable of any deep, unselfish passion, but Charlotte was young and very beautiful; it was a romantic episode,

replete with mystery of a piquant sort. There was a dash of audacity, a challenge flung in the face of public curiosity and morality, in this abduction and masquerading, in thus concealing and exhibiting his treasure at the same time. Then, too, the strange, froward nature of the girl, who, not content with a commonplace intrigue, trod under foot all the social prejudices and proprieties, and plunged head foremost into unmeasured, unrestrained dissipation; the curious combination of the traits of both sexes, of the unbridled passion of a harlot and a man's taste for horses, wine and fencing; her eccentric character, as they say in our day—all combined to keep alive in him a passion, which otherwise would soon have died away in his blasé heart. He refused to follow Jeannin's advice, who urged him to leave Paris, at least for a few weeks, although he shared his fear that the statement they had been compelled to give the stranger might bring trouble upon them. The treasurer, who had nothing to detain him, went away. The commander boldly stood his ground, and after five or six days, as he had heard nothing, he made up his mind that he would be quit of the affair for his fear.

Every evening, as soon as it was dark, he betook himself to the doctor's house, wrapped in his cloak, with his hat pulled down over his eyes, and armed to the teeth. For forty-eight hours, Charlotte, whom to avoid confusion, we will continue to call the Chevalier de Morauges, was at the point of death. Her youth and the strength of her constitution, however, triumphed over the violent fever which set in, as well as over the problematical skill of Perregaud, the surgeon. If De Jars was the only one who visited the chevalier, he was not alone in his anxiety concerning his health. Master Quennebert

was forever prowling about the neighborhood. As he did not wish his own presence to be remarked, he kept men on the watch to keep him informed of what was going on. Their instructions simply bade them let him know if they saw a funeral procession leave the house; also to ascertain the name of the deceased, and communicate it to him instantly. But this exterior scrutiny was useless, or else was negligently performed; for his questions invariably met the same reply: "We have seen nothing."

He then determined to apply to the man who could certainly give him the positive information he desired.

One night the commander left Perregaud's house, where he had learned that the patient had passed a comfortable day, and that he was believed to be surely convalescent. De Jars had taken but a few steps in the street when he felt a hand upon his shoulder. He turned and saw a man, whom in the darkness he could not recognize.

"Forgive me for detaining you, Commander De Jars," said Quennebert, "but I have a word to say to you."

"Ah! it's you, Monsieur; are you here to give me the opportunity I have so longed for?"

"I don't understand."

"We are on more equal terms now; you won't take me by surprise, almost unarmed, and if you are a man of spirit, we will measure the length of our swords."

"I fight with you! why, pray? you have not insulted me."

"A truce to pleasantry, Monsieur; don't force me to repent that I have been more generous than you. I might have killed you before this if I had chosen. I could have put the barrel of this pistol at your breast,

and fired, or said to you: 'Surrender at discretion,' as you said to me the other day."

"And what would you have gained by that, commander?"

"I would have made certain that a secret you ought not to know should not be divulged."

"It would have been the very worst thing you could have done in your own interest. If I am killed the paper you signed will speak. Ah! you think that after shooting me down, you would simply have to stoop over my body, fumble in the pockets of my doublet, resume possession of the document that accuses you, and destroy it? You do little honor to my good sense and intelligence. Your grand seigneurs can do without those qualities, for the law is on your side. But when a nobody, a clown like myself, embarks on an affair, which might grate on the ears of justice, he must take his precautions; it isn't enough for him to be right, he must also make sure of impunity, and retain all the advantages which are afforded by a righteous cause and his address and courage. I have no desire to humiliate you a second time, so let us say no more about it. The paper is deposited with my notary, and if a single day passes without his seeing me, he is to open it and make it public. Thus all the chances are in my favor still. Now that you are warned, I have no disposition to bluster unnecessarily. I am quite prepared to recognize the distinctions of rank, and to speak to you, if you insist upon it, with uncovered head."

"What have you to ask of me, Monsieur?"

"News of the Chevalier de Morauges."

"He is ill, very ill."

"Hark ye, commander, don't try to deceive me. One ordinarily believes what one hopes; but I long for that

so earnestly that I don't dare to believe you. I saw you when you left the surgeon's house, and your step and your gestures were not those of a man who had just heard bad news, quite the contrary. You looked up at the sky, rubbed your hands, and walked quickly on tiptoe. Those are not indications of grief."

"You are a shrewd observer, Monsieur."

"I have already remarked, commander, that those of us half-enfranchised serfs, whom chance or their own wills raise above the narrow, obscure sphere in which they were born, must needs keep their ears always open, and have the eyes of a lynx. If I had given you the short answer you gave me, you would have said to your servants, on the mere suspicion that I might by lying: —'Chastise this rascal.' But I am obliged to prove to you that you didn't mean to tell me the truth. I am certain now that the chevalier is in no danger this evening."

"If you were so well informed, why did you ask me?"

"Why, I didn't know it until you just told me the contrary."

"Monsieur!" cried De Jars, growing restive under this cold, satirical courtesy.

"Do me justice, commander. The yoke galls you, but you must agree that my hand is light. For a whole week I have had you at my mercy. Have you been annoyed? has your secret been betrayed? No. I shall continue to act as heretofore. I hope, however grievously such a result would afflict you, I hope that the chevalier will die of his wound. I haven't the same reasons that you have for loving him, as you can readily understand without my explaining my interest in the affair. But hopes have no weight in such a matter, they neither induce nor allay the fever. I have told you that

I did not wish to force the chevalier to resume his real name. I may make use of the document, and I may never use it. If I feel obliged to produce it I will give you fair warning. Do you, on your part, swear to me upon your honor that you will conceal nothing from me, and that whether you remain at Paris or go elsewhere, I shall be kept informed of everything that concerns the chevalier. If he is restored to health, or if he dies, you will notify me; it is a secret between us two, and it is not necessary for you to reveal it to the pretended Morauges."

"You swear, Monsieur, to give me warning if you propose to make use of the evidence I gave you? What pledge have I that you will keep your oath?"

"My conduct thus far, and the fact that my promise is voluntary."

"Do you hope that you will not have to wait long?"

"Yes, but an indiscretion would injure me as much as you. I have no grievance against you, commander; you have not stolen any treasure from me; I make no demand upon you for restitution. That which you esteem a treasure is a burden to me, and will perhaps become so to you later. I simply desire to know when you are relieved of it by your own will, or God's. To-day there is hope of saving the chevalier's life, is there not?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Promise to let me know if he leaves the house safe and sound."

"I promise."

"And in the contrary event you will also let me know?"

"I will. But to whom shall I send the intelligence!"

"I supposed that since our first interview you would have ascertained who I am, and that I had no need to tell

you my name. But I have no motive to conceal it from you. Master Quennebert, notary, Saint-Denis. I won't detain you longer, commander; pardon a simple *bourgeois* for assuming to dictate conditions to a gentleman. Chance has served me well this once, as against twenty other times when it has gone the other way."

De Jars made no reply, but nodded his head to the notary, and walked away, muttering between his teeth, and cursing in an undertone the fate that compelled him to submit patiently to such humiliation.

"He's as insolent as a lackey who doesn't fear a thrashing," he said; "how arrogantly the puppy abuses his position! He raises his hat to me when his foot is on my throat. Ah! if I can ever have my turn, Monsieur Notary, you will have a bad quarter of an hour!"

Every man has his own understanding of what honor requires. De Jars would have been cut in pieces rather than break the promise he had given Quennebert a week before. His word at that time saved his life; and that being so, to have been false to it would have been in his eyes a dastardly thing. But the engagement he had just entered into had not the same moral sanction; he did not yield on this second occasion to threats, or to avert any serious danger, and it would not have embarrassed him to compound with his conscience in relation to it. He would gladly have taken advantage of a favorable time and place for a meeting with the notary, and have insulted him until he compelled him to fight, nor did it enter his head that a bourgeois could contend successfully against him. But his death would not have assured his secret, and would have rendered his conduct even less excusable; moreover, despite his rank and his boasts, he was not sufficiently certain of impunity to venture to commit any fresh misdeed. He was forced

therefore to conclude that he must submit and champ the bit.

"*Pardieu!*" he said, "I know what it is that embarrasses the clown. Oh well! even if I must suffer from it myself, I will do my utmost to prevent his chain from being broken. Yes, that's my best course; I will keep an eye on him, and perhaps I may succeed in keeping a naked sword suspended over his head, without letting him know whence the attack comes."

Pending the opportunity to put his revengeful schemes in execution, De Jars kept his word. About a month after this interview Quennebert learned from him that the Chevalier de Morauges had left Perregaud's house perfectly cured. But the unfortunate ending of this freak seemed to have subdued his adventurous spirit. Nothing more was heard of the handsome chevalier. Those who had known him ceased to remember him, always excepting Mademoiselle de Guerchi, who vividly recalled his impassioned words, his eloquent eyes which shone with love, and his burning kisses. She tried in vain to banish his image from her mind. As the Duc de Vitry assured her that he had slain his adversary on the spot, she said to herself that there was no infidelity in loving a dead man, and she continued to live comfortably on the reality, while keeping her tenderest thoughts and her fruitless regrets for one whom she had no hope of seeing again.

We now ask the reader's permission to pass over an interval of something more than a year, and to bring upon the stage a character of secondary importance, but whom it is impossible to leave any longer in the darkness.

We have said that the amours of Quennebert and the widow Rapally were viewed with jealousy by a certain far-away cousin of the defunct Rapally. The love of

this rejected aspirant was no more sincere, nor were his motives more honorable, than the notary's. Although endowed with a physique little calculated to multiply his conquests, he rated his personal charms as being at least equal to those of his fair relative, and in that regard it would be impossible to reproach him with undue self-conceit. But all his languishing glances were thrown away. Madame Rapally's heart was prejudiced in favor of his rival, and it is no simple matter to supplant a passion that has taken root in the heart of a widow of forty-six, who is infatuated enough to believe that she inspires such passion as she herself feels. The unlucky Trumeau had found it to be so twenty times over. His declarations prepared beforehand, and his clever attempts to arouse suspicion, procured him nothing but rebuffs and ill-natured compliments. But perseverance was his leading characteristic; moreover, he could not reconcile himself to the thought of seeing the widow's fortune pass to other hands than his own, and each of his disappointments redoubled his longing to put a spoke in his competitor's wheel. He was constantly on the watch for anything that would give him material for a denunciation. He grew yellow at this sterile trade, and pined away, until from being a mere rival he became a deadly enemy. He conceived an implacable hatred for the notary. To get the better of him, to show him the door in his turn after so long and obstinate a struggle and after so many successive defeats, would have seemed to him an incomplete victory, too mild a vengeance.

Quennebert was well well aware of the untiring zeal with which Trumeau was seeking to do him an ill turn; he might, it is true, easily have overturned the whole structure of slander, backbiting, and innuendoes. He need have worried but little over his rival's manœuvres

if he had chosen to take all that Madame Rapally offered him. His greatest difficulty was, not to win the victory, but to stop short when the victory was half won, to keep alive the widow's hopes, without wearing out her patience. His affairs were in a wretched condition. From day to day, her fortune, from which he took a slice now and then, under the guise of a loan, became more necessary to him; but he dared not lay his hand upon it. It was the torture of Tantalus. His creditors were pursuing him without mercy. With great difficulty he had induced them to grant him one last brief respite; that past, and it was all over with him, with his reputation and his future.

It was early in February, 1660, that Trumeau called one morning upon his cousin; it was about a month since he had been there, and Quennebert and the widow had concluded that he had wearied of the game and thrown up his hand. But his hatred was more bitter than ever, on the contrary, and by following up certain clues that fell in his way, he had secured what he thought to be a sure means of ruining his rival. When he appeared, his features betrayed an inward satisfaction, which he could hardly restrain. He had in his hand a little roll of paper tied with a bit of ribbon.

The widow was alone, buried in the depths of a large easy-chair in front of the fire-place. She was reading for the twentieth time a letter Quennebert had written her the day before. The epistle must have been written in a very ardent strain, to judge by the good woman's blissful and expansive expression. Trumeau had no difficulty in guessing who was the author of the scrawl, and the sight, instead of angering him, brought a smile to his lips.

"Ah! is it you, cousin," said the widow, folding the

precious paper and slipping it under her stomacher, "good morning to you; isn't it a long while since we have seen you? more than a fortnight, I believe. Have you been ill?"

"So you have remarked my absence, cousin? that's very kind of you, certainly, you have never led me to expect such thoughtful consideration. No, I haven't been ill, thank God; but I determined not to impose my presence upon you so often. A friendly visit now and then, such as this I am making to-day, will suit you better—isn't it so? Pray tell me something of your gallant suitor, Master Quennebert."

"You have a very satirical way of speaking of him, Trumeau; have you heard anything unpleasant?"

"No, cousin, and I should be greatly shocked if anything happened to him."

"You don't speak as you think, for you detest him."

"Frankly, I have no reason to love him. Except for him I should be happy now perhaps; my love might have touched your heart. But then I had to bring myself to it, and as you prefer him to me," he added, with a sigh, "why, I hope you may never repent."

"Thanks for your good wishes, cousin; I am charmed to find you in such a benevolent frame of mind. You mustn't lay it up against me that I don't return your love; you know that the heart isn't to be reasoned with."

"I have only one favor to ask of you."

"What is it?"

"I speak in your interest much more than in my own. For your own happiness, don't let this seductive notary acquire too much influence over you. You may say that I, being his rejected rival, would naturally try to injure him, but nevertheless, if it is true that he loves you less than he claims to do ——."

"Come, come! hold your wicked tongue; are you going to begin your slanders again? You are playing a miserable game, Trumeau. I have always refrained from telling Master Quennebert of the lies and sneaking things you are forever saying about him. If he knew of them, he would make it hot for you, and I am sure you would be at a loss to back them up in his presence."

"Not in the least, I promise you; on the other hand I believe that if I said a word he would be the more crestfallen of the two. Yes, I have let you rebuff me and despise and insult me. I have been called a slanderer when I said: 'This gallant hunter of widows loves you not for your lovely eyes but for your strong-box.' He amuses you with fine promises, but as to marrying you, never ——."

"I beg your pardon?" interposed Madame Rapally.

"I know what I am talking about. You will never be Madame Quennebert."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Jealousy has taken away what little brain fell to your share, Trumeau. Since I saw you last, cousin, important things have happened, and I was going to write you this very day to invite you to the wedding."

"To the wedding?"

"Yes. I am to be married to-morrow."

"To-morrow?—to Quennebert?" stammered Trumeau.

"To Quennebert," echoed the widow, triumphantly.

"It isn't possible!" cried Trumeau.

"It is so possible that you will see it to-morrow, and hereafter I will beg you to look upon him not as a rival, but as my husband. To insult him will be to insult me."

The tone in which these words were uttered made it impossible for Trumeau to doubt the truth of her announcement; he hung his head, and held his peace for a few moments, like a man who reflects before coming to an irrevocable decision. He twisted the little roll of paper back and forth between his fingers, in a way that clearly indicated his uncertainty as to whether he had best unroll it and read what it contained. At last he thrust it into the pocket of his doublet, rose, and walked up to his cousin.

"I ask your pardon," he said; "this marriage changes the nature of my thoughts completely. The moment that Master Quennebert marries you, I cease to have any grievance against him. I am bound to acknowledge that my suspicions were unjust, and I hope that you will consent to overlook the violence of my attacks upon him, in view of the motive which induced them. I will not allow myself another word, cousin, and the future I am sure will prove to you how unselfish is my devotion to your interests."

Madame Rapally was too happy and too sure that she was beloved, not to find it easy to forgive. With the self-satisfaction and false generosity of a woman who has inspired two violent passions, and who has the kindness to pity the rejected suitor, she gave Trumeau her hand. He took it respectfully, and kissed it with a cunning grimace. They parted on good terms, and it was agreed that Trumeau should attend the nuptial ceremony, which was to be solemnized in a church behind the Hotel de Ville, a neighborhood to which the widow had lately removed after selling her house on Pont Saint-Michel to good advantage.

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed Trumeau as he left the house, "I should have made an infernal fool of myself if I had

been in a hurry to speak. At last I have that villain Quennebert on the hip! He is idiot enough to run himself through. He throws himself over the precipice, and doesn't even put me to the trouble of pushing him."

The next day the ceremony took place. Quennebert led his interesting bride-elect to the altar, decked out like a reliquary, radiant and blooming, and so hideously ugly in her absurd finery that the handsome notary was ashamed of her, and felt the blood mount to the roots of his hair. Just as they entered the church, a coffin, on which lay a sword, and which was followed by a single man whose dress and bearing indicated that he was of noble birth, went in at the same door. The wedding procession gave place to the funeral cortege; the living stood aside to let the dead pass. The man following the coffin glanced stealthily at Quennebert and started involuntarily, as if the sight of him affected him painfully.

"What an unlucky meeting!" muttered Madame Rapally; "perhaps it's a bad omen!"

"I can assure you that it's just the opposite," rejoined Quennebert, with a smile.

The two ceremonies were performed at the same time in two contiguous chapels, and the psalms of the burial service, which worried the widow exceedingly, and sounded in her ears like an ominous foreboding of evil to come, produced an entirely different effect upon Quennebert, and smoothed away all the wrinkles from his ordinarily thoughtful face, so that Trumeau and the other guests, who were not in the secret of his hilarity, marveled at it, and finally concluded that he really deemed himself fortunate to have became the legitimate proprietor of Madame Rapally's charms.

The widow passed a day of sweet anticipation. When night came she withdrew to her bedroom, but had not been there two minutes when she gave a loud shriek. She had found and perused a paper which Trumeau had succeeded in depositing upon her bed, without being seen. The revelation it contained was so terrible that she fell senseless on the floor.

Quennebert, who was in the next room, reflecting with sober face upon his good fortune, ran to her when he heard her shriek, and raised her from the floor. As his eyes fell upon the paper he, too, cried out in surprise and wrath; but it was characteristic of him to make up his mind quickly, whatever his situation. He placed Madame Quennebert, still unconscious, upon the bed, called her maid and bade her look to her mistress with the utmost attention, and particularly to tell her from him when she came to herself, that everything would be explained; then he rushed from the house. An hour later he made his way, almost by force, and in spite of the opposition of the servants, into the presence of Commander De Jars. He handed him the fatal paper, and said:

"Tell me the truth, commander! Have you undertaken to be revenged for the long suspense in which I kept you? I don't think it; for, after what has happened, you know that now I have nothing to fear. And yet you alone knew the secret, and it may be that, as there was nothing else you could do, you took your revenge by destroying my future happiness, by sowing suspicion and food for trouble between my wife and myself."

The commander swore that he had nothing whatever to do with the disclosure.

"If you didn't do it," said Quennebert, "it must have

been a miserable wretch named Trumeau, whose jealous instincts put him on the track of the truth. But he knows only the half of it, and I wasn't enough in love or enough of an ass to get caught in the trap. I promised you that I would be discreet and not abuse my advantage, and I have kept my promise as long as I can without danger to myself. But now you understand that I must defend myself, and I can only do it by invoking your evidence. So do you leave Paris to-night, select a safe hiding-place somewhere where you will not be molested, for to-morrow I shall speak. If I am quit of the affair for a woman's tears, if I have only to soothe and convince a weeping bride, you can return without risk; but if the blow, as is only too probable, has been dealt by the hand of a rival furious because of the failure of his suit, it will surely not rest there; the law will have to take a hand in it, and then I shall have to get my head out of the noose which they are already preparing to tighten."

"You are right, Monsieur," returned the commander; "I can not risk my credit at court by defying your disclosures. That was an intrigue which will cost me dear, and it has cured me, I promise you, of all inclination to run after adventures. My preparations will not take long, and to-morrow morning I shall be far from Paris."

Quennebert saluted him, and returned home to console his Ariadne.

The charge which might be lodged against Master Quennebert as a result of this discovery was an extremely serious one; nothing less than his head was involved in it. But he was undisturbed, for he knew how he could extricate himself triumphantly from the affair.

The Platonic affection of Louise de Guerchi for the comely Chevalier de Morauges did none but a moral

wrong to the Duc de Vitry. After the satisfactory explanation she gave her lover, and her reconciliation with him, the young woman did not think it wise, as we have already hinted, to play the prude any longer, and the result was that at the end of a year an inconvenient state of things arose which it became necessary to seek a means of concealing. Angélique, to be sure, was so accustomed to similar episodes, that she experienced neither shame nor sorrow; on the other hand she saw in it a pledge for her future welfare, and a bond which would tend to keep the duke faithful to her. But he, who apparently thought that he had seduced a virtue of the most unsullied type, was in despair at the thought of his mistress' reputation being thus compromised. He dreaded the scandal, and Angélique, that she might not seem too careless of her own good name, was fain to agree with her lover, and to lament in unison with him.

One evening a short time before Master Quennebert's marriage, lovely Mademoiselle de Guerchi set out, so the world was informed, on a journey of two or three weeks. She drove around Paris in a post-chaise, and entered the city secretly by a barrier where the duke was awaiting her with a chair. The bearers took her to the house to which De Jars took his pretended nephew after the duel. The poor girl, who was to pay dear for her sins, remained there twenty-four hours, and emerged in a coffin. The body was hidden in the cellars of the Prince de Condé's palace and consumed with quicklime. Two days after this frightful occurrence, Commander de Jars appeared once more at the same house, hired a room, and installed the chevalier therein.

This house, to which we must introduce the reader, stood at the corner of Rue de la Tixeranderie and Rue

des Deux-Portes. There was nothing on its exterior to attract attention, unless it was a double sign bearing these words:

MARIE LEROUX, WIDOW CONSTANTIN,
SWORN MIDWIFE;

and below:

CLAUDE PERREGAUD, SURGEON.

This sign was on the Rue de la Tixeranderie front, in which there were only a few narrow apertures; the windows looked upon the courtyard. The outer-door, at the very threshold of which was the first step of a winding staircase, was at the right of the low arch, at the end of Rue des Deux-Portes. This dwelling, notwithstanding its poverty stricken, dilapidated appearance, was frequented by wealthy persons, and superb equipages were often seen standing nearby. Often also, at night, great ladies glided through the door, and remained there a few days under assumed names; and at the end of that time the deadly secrets of the infamous trade plied by La Constantin and Claude Perregaud restored their honor, so far as appearances went, and revamped their reputation as virtuous women.

On the first and second floors were a dozen or more rooms, where the mysterious abominations were performed. The room used as a waiting and reception room was furnished in a most peculiar style, and was filled with objects of strange and outlandish aspect. It was at once the operating-room of a surgeon, the laboratory of an apothecary and alchemist, and the den of a sorcerer. There were tools of all sorts, thrown together pell-mell, furnaces, horns, and books containing the wildest fancies of the human brain. There were the twenty folio volumes written by Albert le Grand, the works of his

disciple Thomas of Cantopré, of Alchindus, Averroës, Avicenne, Alchabitim, David de Pleine-Campy, called Édelphe, surgeon to Louis XIII., and author of the famous book, *L'Hydre morbifique exterminée par l'Hercule chimique.* Besides a bronze head modeled upon that of the English cobbler, Bacon, which answered questions put to it, and could foretell the future "by means of the *Almucheſi* mirror, and of different combinations of the rules of perspective," was an egg-shell, the same which Cayet, if we may believe D'Aubigné, formerly used "to make men with seeds, mandragora and crimson silk, over a slow fire."

In the closets, whose sliding panels were secured by hidden springs, were phials filled with noxious drugs, which did their work, unfortunately, only too surely. In the two most prominent places, and facing one another, were portraits of Hierophilus, a Greek physician, and Agnodice, his pupil, who first plied the trade of midwife at Athens.

For several years La Constantin and Claude Perregaud had worked together, and they had never been disturbed. Many people knew their secret, but they were all interested in keeping silent, and the confederates had come at last to believe that their impunity was secure. One evening, however, Perregaud returned home with consternation written on his pale face, and trembling in every limb. He had been informed that the authorities had become suspicious of them. Some time before, the vicars-general, and *penitenciers* had sent a deputation to the first president of the parliament, deeming it their duty to advise him, that during the year six hundred women had avowed in confession that they had slain their offspring by means of draughts administered to them.

Justice awoke at this revelation, and a descent upon the house was to take place that night.

They consulted for some time and, as usually happens, could not agree upon any satisfactory plan. The actual presence of the danger was needed to restore their presence of mind. Toward midnight there was a violent knocking at the street door, and a voice was distinctly heard, calling upon them to open in the king's name.

"We may yet save ourselves," cried the chemist with a sudden inspiration. He rushed into the room where the pretended chevalier lay, and said to him:

"Officers of the law are coming up here! if they discover your sex you are lost, and so are we. Leave it all to me."

At a sign from him La Constantin went down to the door and the domiciliary visit began in the rooms on the first floor, while Claude Perregaud was making a cut on the chevalier's right hand, a cut which caused him little pain, and was to stand for a recent sword wound.

Surgery and medicine were at this time so confused, embarrassed with so much paraphernalia, and bristling with so many scientific absurdities, that the profusion of outlandish objects piled on the floor and tables, and even the titles of certain treatises which they had not the time to put out of sight, caused no astonishment.

Fortunately for them, the chevalier happened to be at that moment their only boarder. The officers reached his room, and the first objects that met their eyes were the hat, sword and spurred boots of the wounded man. Claude Perregaud hardly raised his eyes as they entered; he simply motioned to them to make no noise, and went on dressing the wound. Completely deceived by

appearances, the leader demanded the patient's name and the cause of his wound. La Constantin replied that it was the young Chevalier de Morauges, nephew of Commander de Jars, who had had an affair of honor, and that his uncle brought him there hardly an hour before. The one who asked the questions wrote down this valuable information upon his tablets, and they withdrew, having discovered nothing.

Everything would have gone off marvelously, if nothing more had been necessary than to cure the chevalier of a wound in the hand. But when Perregaud made him this present of an improvised wound, La Constantin had already begun to administer her wicked remedies. The chevalier was attacked by a violent fever, and on the third day died in childbirth. It was his body, attended by De Jars, that Master Quennebert met at the church door on his wedding day.

That happened which the notary anticipated. Madame Quennebert, furious at having been deceived, would not credit her husband's justification; and Trumeau, who certainly lost no time, lodged a charge of bigamy against him the next day. It was a copy of the notary's marriage contract with Josephine-Charlotte Boullenois that he placed on the nuptial bed. He discovered the truth by mere chance, and his action was a challenge to his rival to produce the certificate of his first wife's death.

Charlotte Boullenois, after two years of married life, filed a petition for separation, which Quennebert at first opposed. During the proceedings upon her petition, she withdrew to the convent of La Raquette, where De Jars entered into an intrigue with her, and without much difficulty persuaded her to allow herself to be abducted. He concealed his conquest in male attire, which was

marvelously well-suited to Charlotte's somewhat unfeminine figure and her decidedly masculine tastes.

At first Quennebert undertook an energetic but profitless search for her. He gradually accustomed himself, however, to this enforced divorce, and to his *de facto* freedom, which he used to good purpose. His affairs soon felt the effects of his extravagance, but when he made the acquaintance of the widow Rapally, whose fortune would very handily repair the ravages he had made in his own, he was obliged to meet her advances with great reserve. At last he had reached a point where he must either go to prison, or consent to marry her in spite of the risk that he ran thereby. He had fixed the day, intending to leave Paris a day or two after the ceremony, and take his wife with him, as soon as he had satisfied his creditors. In the interval, and while Trumeau was congratulating himself on his opportune discovery, his good luck brought the pretended Chevalier de Morauges back to La Constantin's. As he had never lost sight of De Jars, and had kept him constantly under surveillance, he was informed of all that took place there, and his second marriage was celebrated one day subsequent to the death of Charlotte Boullenois; thus he was not likely to have any serious falling out with the authorities. He produced the document written by Mademoiselle de Guerchi, as well as that the commander gave him, and he caused the body to be exhumed. This last piece of evidence proved the truth of all his assertions, extraordinary and improbable as they seemed at first.

But these revelations called attention once more to La Constantin and Perregaud. When the authorities were once fairly on the scent, they soon ran down the game, and a decree of parliament sentenced them "to be hanged and strangled upon a gallows erected for

that purpose at the crossroads of Croix-du-Trahoir, their dead bodies to remain there twenty-four hours, then taken to the gibbet at Paris," etc.

It was stated that they had amassed enormous sums in their infamous profession. Such scandalous discoveries were made from the memoranda scattered through the registers found on their premises, that, in order not to involve a great number of people of high rank and station, the accusation against them was confined to the poisoning of Angélique de Guerchi, and Charlotte Boullenois.

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